

Annual Report of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in accordance with Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires:

22. (1) *Every public body shall prepare and publish not later than 30 June in each year a report in relation to the immediately preceding year in a form which does not enable the identification of the persons involved containing information relating to the matters specified in subsection (2).*

(2) *Those matters are—*

(a) *the number of protected disclosures made to the public body,*

(b) *the action (if any) taken in response to those protected disclosures, and*

(c) *such other information relating to those protected disclosures and the action taken as may be requested by the Minister from time to time.*

This is the first report of the HEA and covers the period 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2016. Reports will be published on an annual basis hereafter.

Statutory Instrument 339 of 2014 prescribes the Chief Executive of the HEA as a person to receive disclosures of relevant wrongdoings as follows:

<p>Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority</p>	<p>(a) All matters relating to the planning and development of higher education and research in the State.</p> <p>(b) All matters relating to funding for universities and certain institutions of higher education designated under the Higher Education Authority Act 1971 (No. 22 of 1971).</p>
--	--

In **2015** there were five protected disclosures made to the HEA under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

Three of these disclosures relate to the University of Limerick. In 2015 the HEA engaged a firm of consultants to review the processes employed by the institution in question to inquire into the allegations made by the disclosers. Following extensive consultation with the disclosers and institution there then followed the appointment of an independent facilitator to meet with key parties and investigate how the issues could be addressed. The HEA and Department of Education and Skills are currently considering the next steps to be taken in relation to these issues.

Two other disclosures were separately forwarded by the Department of Education and Skills to the HEA in respect of NUI Galway and IT Tallaght. Each disclosure was investigated in detail by the HEA and has been concluded.

In **2016** there were three protected disclosures made to the HEA under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. All three relate to the University of Limerick. Some of the disclosers had been additional contributors to the review commissioned by the HEA in 2015 referred to above. In addition to these formal protected disclosures described, during 2015 and 2016 the HEA received other allegations or correspondence from other staff, former staff and students of the University. The HEA and Department of Education and Skills are currently considering the next steps to be taken in relation to these issues.

The HEA has not received any protected disclosures from its own staff.