

Higher Education Authority**Report of the 385th Meeting held on 27th June 2017
in 3 Shelbourne Buildings, Dublin 4.**

Present: Mr Tony Donohoe
Professor Orla Feely
Dr Sharon Feeney
Ms Annie Hoey
Mr Michael Horgan, Chairman
Ms Darina Kneafsey
Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan
Mr Pól Ó Móráin
Dr Lynn Ramsey
Dr John Wall (via Skype)

Apology: Dr Judith Eaton

In attendance: Dr Graham Love
Mr Michael Kerrigan
Mr Padraic Mellett (items 2-18)
Dr Gemma Irvine (items 4,7)
Ms Nicki O’Connor (item 4)
Dr Abigail Chantler (item 7)
Mr Fabrice Hénard (item 7)
Ms Nadine Burquel (item 7)
Mr Andrew Brownlee (items 8, 9, 13)
Ms Brid Horan (item 8)

1. Members only session

1.1 Members raised the quality of Board documentation. Papers need to be sharper and more business focused.

2. Report of 384th Meeting

2.1 The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Item 8 – It was agreed to have a four year plan for meetings to be held off-site ready for the September Board meeting. Mr Mellett indicated that the Board was

scheduled to have a meeting in IADT in 2016 but this was subsequently changed to the HEA's offices.

4. CEO's Report

- 4.1 The CEO updated on his recent attendance at the Public Accounts Committee. Reference was made to the minutes of a special meeting of the Board in October 2014 which considered the Munster TU application and which were not posted on the HEA website. It was agreed that these should be published on the HEA website forthwith.
- 4.2 Members noted the intention of the HEA to join Transparency Ireland's Integrity-at-Work programme. It was agreed to circulate to members the HEA's own protected disclosure guidelines.
- 4.3 Members were briefed on work undertaken by the Executive to prepare for the introduction of the GDPR in May 2018.
- 4.4 It was agreed to provide the Board with analytics (at least twice a year) on the new website.
- 4.5 The CEO briefed members on the background to the appointment of Dr Richard Thorn (review into governance, HR and financial practices and procedures at the University of Limerick) and Mr. Michael McLoone (review of Feed Henry and other spin-out companies in WIT). The former was selected by the DES. The CEO discussed the latter with the Chair. It was noted that he has no recent connection with the HE sector. In relation to UL he advised that the HEA had exhausted all of its powers and had advised the DES accordingly. UL subsequently agreed to an independent investigation which the DES requested the HEA manage. It was agreed to consult members electronically in future in relation to persons being considered for appointment to carry out investigations.
- 4.6 It was noted that the recent University Industry Interaction Network (UIIN) Conference was a significant event that could have been better used to promote the positive engagement between industry and higher education.

5. HEA Strategic Plan

- 5.1 The CEO outlined progress since the Board's meeting in March. The Executive was requested to consider revising the Vision statement and the wording around the Mission and Values. It was also agreed that the strategy needs to be consistent with the new system performance framework currently being drafted by the DES. While it was noted that many of the strategic priorities from the previous plan

remain valid consideration should be given to some new priorities. A number of priorities were suggested including lifelong learning, the student experience, leadership capacity in the HEIs and supporting business.

Decision: The memorandum was approved subject to;

1. Revision of the vision statement as discussed at the meeting.
2. Consolidation of stronger, more active language in the expression of strategic priorities/actions.
3. Articulation of success criteria for the strategy in measurable terms.

6. Mid-year report on 2017 work-plan

6.1 Members noted the Executive's report.

7. HEA annual Report 2016

Decision: Members approved the annual report subject to a number of changes to the letter to the Minister.

8. Report on National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

8.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Hénard and Ms Burquel and thanked them for their report. Their presentation to the Board focused on the following;

-) Methodology
-) Key findings under the following headings;
 1. Relevance
 2. Efficiency
 3. Effectiveness
 4. Sustainability
 5. Impact
-) Recommendations
 1. The HEA/DES should continue to support the forum
 2. The forum needs to be embedded in a wider policy context
 3. Clarify the mission and activities of the forum
 4. The forum needs to become a T&L resource centre
 5. Design a strategy for impact evaluation
 6. Foster system-wide activities

8.2 The following issues were raised by members;

-) What would be the implications were a decision to be taken to cease funding the forum? Mr Hénard indicated this would be a big loss for Ireland. The point was made that many of the forum's activities are not replicated in other countries.
-) What has been the level of engagement with students? Members were advised that the engagement has been quite positive.
-) The impact of the teaching awards programme was queried. Ms Burquel noted it was a very time consuming exercise and questioned whether it impacted on HR practices including promotion policy. Ms Hoey noted there was considerable international interest in the teaching awards scheme.

8.3 Members considered the next steps. The following issues were raised;

-) The origin of the forum and why there was not an equivalent one for research.
-) The impact of the forum. Dr Irvine noted the terms of reference for the review requested the consultants to assess the potential impact of the forum. It was too early to provide a definitive impact assessment.
-) Students have found the forum as a key enabler of student engagement. A key challenge is to get all HEIs to engage with the forum. Accordingly, a closer link between the forum and the HEA will need to be carefully managed given the potential optics of such a development.

Decision: It was agreed to review this matter in September. The Executive was requested to make a robust business case for the approach it is recommending. The case will need to be fully costed and provide for an impact assessment. The Board of the forum should be requested to make provision for an interim Director.

9. Final Report of the Expert Group on the Review of the Funding Model for HEIs

9.1 The Chair welcomed Ms Horan, thanked the Expert Group for their excellent work and summarised his understanding of the report's recommendations. Ms Horan outlined the group's key objectives including;

-) Embedding lifelong learning
-) Managing demographic challenges
-) Supporting access to higher education
-) Supporting research and innovation
-) Ensuring there is transparency in the model – she noted there was an opportunity for the system to be better understood.

She noted the need to keep the model under review. She thanked the Board, the Executive and members of the Expert and Advisory Groups for their assistance with this review.

9.2 The following issues were raised;

-) It is very important that the funding model incentivises and supports excellent research and innovation. While the decision to double the top-slice for research performance was welcome, the total provision at €18m is low. Members were advised that the full report goes into more detail as to how the core grant supports research, including the total recurrent funding provided for research c. €143m. The international members on the Expert Group advised on the appropriate weightings for the research top slice.
-) Will the single pot support diversity of institutions? Members were advised that Ireland is a small country so this should be manageable, however this recommendation will not be actioned until a working group has explored the implications of a move to a single pot. It was confirmed the single pot will not impact on the funding available for research.
-) Was the impact of revenue from international students considered? The Expert Group did consider alternative sources of revenue but agreed it would not be appropriate for the model to disincentivise institutions that earned other income.
-) Was consideration given to making some provision for completion rates? Ms Horan indicated that it was felt that funding on the basis of the March student returns was a reasonable proxy. There was a risk that having too many variables would make the model less easily understood. The group was wary of the unintended consequences of funding by reference to graduate output.
-) The language around capacity building should be strengthened and include provision for progressing gender equality.
-) The role of the implementation working group- should it include members from the sector? Should it have an independent chair?

Decision: Members approved the recommendations, noting that the final report would be finalised and circulated to members within the next two weeks. The Minister will be briefed on 20th July and it was hoped to publish the report shortly afterwards.

10. Report of the Finance and Governance Committee

Decision: Members approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations relating to the Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and funding for AIT apprenticeships.

11. Report of the System Development and Performance Management Committee

Decision: Members approved the Committee's report and update on System Performance over the course of 2016.

12. Appointment of HEA nominee as an Ordinary Member of HEAnet

Decision: Members approved the appointment of Dr Vivienne Patterson as the HEA's nominee.

13. Addressing growth in student numbers (Managing demographic challenge)

13.1 Discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting. The Executive will further develop the memorandum.

14. Report on 2017 Budget Meetings

14.1 Members noted the budgetary position outlined in memorandum A32/17. Discussion focused on the:

-) budgetary position in WIT and steps being taken to manage this.
-) factors underpinning the deficit in TCD. The Executive agreed to revert back to the Board with a more detailed explanation on the background to the TCD deficit.
-) appropriate reserve position for an institution.
-) Need for a supplementary grant from the DES with respect to 2017 national wage agreement.
-) Status and impact of the three year plans submitted by institutions in deficit. Mr Brownlee noted they have had a positive impact.
-) NCAD funding position and need for health and safety capital funding.

Decision: Members noted that a fuller report will be provided at the September meeting. It was agreed that the Executive should write to the DES indicating the Board's support for a supplementary grant and funding to meet the NCAD's health and safety capital modifications.

15. National Bibliometric Report for Ireland

Decision: item noted.

16. Longitudinal Statistics on Graduate Destinations – CSO-HEA Project

Decision: Members noted and welcomed this initiative.

17. Schedule of Matters reserved for the Board

Decision: Members noted the schedule of matters reserved for the Board. The need to develop a performance framework for the CEO was noted.

18. Any other business

18.1 The Chair noted this was Ms Annie Hoey's last meeting as a member of the HEA. He thanked her for her contribution to the work of the HEA over the past 12 months and wished her every success for the future. He congratulated Mr Michael Kerrigan on his election as President of USI and looked forward to him joining the Board formally next month.

18.2 The Executive will circulate details of membership and chairs of the standing committees.

Next Meeting

28th September 2017

Padraic Mellett

29th June 2017