

## Higher Education Authority

### Report of 422<sup>nd</sup> Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in 3 Shelbourne Buildings, Dublin 4

Present: Ms Clare Austick (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Bahram Bekhradnia (agenda items 1-9)  
Mr Tony Donohoe via MS Teams (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Judith Eaton (agenda items 1-9)  
Professor Orla Feely, Deputy Chair (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Sharon Feeney (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Ronan Lyons (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Jim Mountjoy (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan via MS Teams (agenda items 1-9)  
Mr Pól Ó Móráin (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr Lynn Ramsey (agenda items 1-9)  
Dr John Wall via MS Teams (agenda items 1-9)

Apologies: Mr Michael Horgan, Chairperson  
Ms Darina Kneafsey

In attendance: Dr Alan Wall (agenda items 1-9.1)  
Ms Orla Nugent (items 1-8)  
Mr Padraic Mellett (agenda items 1-8)  
Mr Tim Conlon (agenda items 1-8)  
Ms Pearl Cunningham (agenda items 1-8)  
Ms Caitríona Ryan (agenda items 1-8)  
Dr Vivienne Patterson (agenda items 1-8)  
Mr Ciaran McCaffrey (agenda items 1-8)  
Ms Eilis Noonan (agenda items 1-8)  
Dr Andrea Valova (agenda item 4)  
Dr Louise Callinan (agenda items 5-7)  
Mr Simon Roy, OECD (agenda item 4)  
Mr David Smith, IADT (agenda item 5)  
Ms Emma Leahy, IADT (agenda item 5)  
Dr Padraig Walsh, QQI (agenda item 7)

The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chair.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The Deputy Chair reminded all Board members of potential conflicts of interest and asked members to highlight any items that may require attention. No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

#### Quorum

The quorum for HEA Board meetings, six members, was met.

## **1. Report of 421st Board meeting**

1.1 The minutes were approved subject to minor amendments to the record of attendees and paragraph 4.2.

## **2. Matters arising**

2.1 No issues were raised.

## **3. Committee Reports**

### **3.0 Audit and Risk Committee**

3.0.1 Dr Feeney introduced the Committee's report. It was noted that Internal Auditors should be in attendance for the full duration of Committee meetings.

#### *3.0.2 Draft 2021 Financial Statements*

It was recommended that the [Draft 2021 Financial Statements](#) be approved by the Board subject to C&AG Audit.

**Decision:** The Board approved the draft 2021 Financial Statements subject to audit.

#### *3.0.3 Internal Audit review IRC*

The Committee was disappointed that gender equality was omitted from the terms of reference of the review. It was noted however that the IRC recently published a Comprehensive Gender Strategy and Action Plan.

#### *3.0.4 2022 Internal Audit Workplan*

The Committee reviewed the [draft Internal Audit workplan for 2022](#). Further discussions will take place at the Committee's next meeting when the plan will be finalised. A discussion on a review of culture was had and it was noted that this may be included in the HEA Transformation Programme.

The Committee received updates on the data breach (item closed), procurement and implementation of past internal audit recommendations and HEAnet IT security advisory reports.

**Decision:** Members noted the Committee's report.

### **3.1 Finance and Governance Committee**

3.1.1 Dr O'Flanagan introduced the Committee's report. The Committee noted the Management Accounts for February 2022.

The Committee discussed the OECD Thematic Policy Brief “Resourcing Higher Education in Ireland”, and as recommended by the Board, the Executive arranged a presentation to the Board on this report see agenda item 4.

In the context of the discussion on the relationship between funding and quality, QQI were also invited to the Board meeting, see agenda item 6.

### 3.1.2 *IRC Funding Commitments*

The Committee recommended approval to the Board of the IRC programme budget for 2022. The IRC’s programme budget for 2022 is €51,440,192.

The Committee recommended approval of the maximum funding commitment of €118,000 for the 2022 Irish Research Council-European Southern Observatory Studentship Programme. The Committee recommended approval of the maximum funding commitment of €400,000 for a national research coordinator to undertake the European Social Survey Round 11. The Finance and Governance Committee recommended approval the maximum funding commitment of €2,337,500 to make awards under the special Departmental funding allocation to enhance postgraduate research capacity in the technological university sector.

A query was raised by the Committee as to the need for separate funding memos for F14/22, F15/22 and F16/22. The IRC explained that although each of the memos deal with seeking funding approval, as they are multi annual commitments with calls being organised at different times throughout the year, they felt it prudent for each memo to be considered separately.

**Decision:** The Board approved the above IRC funding commitments.

### 3.1.3 *Innovation & Transformation Fund- Projects Updates and 2022 Instalments*

The Finance and Governance Committee recommended approval of payments to institutions in respect of projects funded under the Innovation and Transformation Call 2018, and to note the summary of progress of the projects. It is proposed to provide instalments to institutions from the funding set aside in 2022 to ensure sufficient funding for projects is available at institutional level, while retaining 10% of the amount awarded for balancing payments to be made following the review of final reports in Q4 2022/Q1 2023. The proposed payments are itemised in the following table:

Lead institution	Project name	Project award	Amount remaining to pay	Proposed instalment	Remaining amount for balancing payment*
CIT	Creating entrepreneurial students and graduates	€987,805	€122,740	€23,959.50	€98,780.50
DCU	DCU Global Online Learning Accelerator	€1,359,084	€162,908	€26,999.60	€135,908.40
DkIT	The gateway to success: A virtual hub to support all learners	€321,014	€0		
IT Carlow	Higher Education pathway for Non-Traditional Learners	€355,269	€80,554	€45,027.10	€35,526.90
IT Sligo	Full-time degree programmes accessible via online/blended learning	€543,060	€129,090	€74,784.00	€54,306.00
IUA	Enabling Change	€2,964,381	€752,279	€455,840.90	€296,438.10
LyIT	Innovative opportunities for transforming education	€2,844,000	€550,449	€266,049.00	€284,400.00
MU	MI-Lab	€810,950	€206,679	€125,584.00	€81,095.00
MU	Maynooth University ICT and STEM enhancement	€563,610	€78,282	€21,921.00	€56,361.00
MU	Future Ready	€1,445,440	€343,494	€198,950.00	€144,544.00
RCSI	Establishing a 'Centre for Simulation Education and Research' in Ireland	€1,228,113	€806,393	€683,581.70	€122,811.30
TCD	Student support services' retention and engagement strategy	€1,574,655	€250,659	€93,193.50	€157,465.50
TU Dublin - Blanchardstown Campus	Transformative student centred learning record	€1,389,961	€186,651	€47,654.90	€138,996.10
TU Dublin - City Campus	Enhancing student retention across TU Dublin	€498,088	€83,945	€34,136.20	€49,808.80
UCC	Supporting student transitions to develop distinctive graduate attributes	€936,974	€112,630	€18,932.60	€93,697.40
UCC	COMBINE	€758,900	€117,858	€41,968.00	€75,890.00
UCD	Supporting Student Success	€1,029,750	€0		
UL	Regional Enterprise Academic Partnership	€1,412,971	€331,678	€190,380.90	€141,297.10
UL	HEI Meitheal	€1,426,008	€227,563	€84,962.20	€142,600.80
WIT	Engaging with Lifelong learning	€470,198	€50,722	€3,702.20	€47,019.80
WIT	Student Transition - Promoting opportunities for student success	€397,464	€76,386	€36,639.60	€39,746.40
<b>Total</b>		<b>€23,317,695</b>	<b>€4,670,960</b>	<b>€2,474,266.90</b>	<b>€2,196,693.10</b>

\* Indicates maximum final payment, subject to final report and depending on actual expenditure reported

**Decision:** The Board approved the payments to institutions under the Innovation and Transformation Call 2018.

### 3.1.4 Updated Research & Innovation Technological Sector Allocation Model- Memorandum F\_18A/22

The Finance and Governance Committee recommended approval of the proposed approach to an element of 2022 Research and Innovation Allocation for the technological sector institutions and the resulting allocations to institutions under the Allocation. This memorandum relates to an element of the Research and Innovation Allocation, which reflects research income per staff member in individual institutions and is worth €1.75m in the technological sector (35% of the overall €5m Allocation).

	Allocation 2 (35% of total)	Total Research and Innovation Funding (incl. Allocation 2)
ITC	€74,282	323,386
DKIT	€131,469	230,738
IADT	€54,964	77,961
GMIT	€109,768	302,448
LYIT	€114,718	167,118
ITS	€121,720	385,580
WIT	€404,611	1,040,807
MTU	€373,457	936,543
TU Dublin	€80,567	926,088
TUS	€284,445	609,331
<b>Total</b>	<b>€1,750,000</b>	<b>5,000,000</b>

**Decision:** The Board approved the approach to the element of 2022 Research and Innovation Allocation for the technological sector institutions relating to research income per staff member and the resulting allocations to institutions under the Allocation.

**Decision:** Members noted the Committee's report.

### 3.2 Report of Policy and Strategic Policy Committee

Dr Feeney introduced the Committee's report in the absence of Ms Kneafsey.

#### 3.2.1 Report on Progression in Higher Education

The Statistics Unit of the HEA presented to the Committee regarding the 2019/20 Non-Progression Analysis. The Committee noted that data collated during the pandemic should be used with caution due to the circumstances caused by the pandemic, including different types of assessments and course delivery.

**Decision:** Members approved the release of information on non-progression analysis, subject to a communications plan.

#### 3.2.2 Additional €5m Access Funding

Members were advised the Executive is waiting on a policy decision from DFHERIS in relation to the final new National Access Plan, but options for an additional €5 million in funding was discussed. Options include provision for courses for students with intellectual disabilities, universal design for learning funding allocation, disability supports funding in respect of students in private HEIs, an increased number of PATH 2 bursaries, and a request from NCBI to DFHERIS for funding for its Bookshare digital library.

### 3.2.3 *Communication re FSD*<sup>1</sup>

An election flyer mentioning FSD was discussed. The Committee agreed that the HEA should bring to the attention of the author of the flyer that there was an error in the flyer regarding the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) and the role of the HEA. Policy relating to the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) is a matter for DFHERIS; HEA manages the FSD according to DFHERIS policies.

**Decision:** HEA to write to the author clarifying its role in FSD.

**Decision:** Members noted the Committee's report.

## 3.3 Report of the Research and Graduate Education Committee

3.3.1 Professor Feely introduced the Committee's report.

### 3.3.2 *Update on Engaged Research for Societal Impact*

Ms Kate Morris and Dr Lisa Keating from the IUA provided an update on their Engaged Research for Societal Impact project.

### 3.3.3 *Update on National Open Research Forum*

Dr Daniel Bangert (NORF) provided an update on the draft National Action Plan for Open Research which is currently out for public consultation.

### 3.3.4 *Research Policy Priorities 2022*

The Committee was updated on the HEA Research Policy Priorities for 2022. It was proposed as a first action to update the HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research to be in line with recent developments in research integrity, open research, researcher development, export controls and gender equality. The HEA Executive to draft a revised HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

**Decision:** Members noted the Committee's report.

## 3.4 Report of the System Development and Performance Management Committee

3.4.1 Mr Donohue introduced the Committee's report.

### 3.4.2 *Development of a Performance Framework*

The Committee was asked to consider the proposed approach to the development of the next Performance Framework. It was noted that the HEA Bill 2022 places the System Performance Framework on a legislative footing and assigns primary responsibility for the

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<sup>1</sup> As Dr Sharon Feely is a colleague of Dr Clonan in TU Dublin, she recused herself from this item

development of the performance framework to the HEA. The current framework needs to be updated.

It is proposed that the framework will be structured around high-level themes based on national priorities. HEIs will be asked to identify how they will contribute towards these priorities having regard to their individual mission, scale, regional location, and strategic plans, in accordance with the ambition to safeguard institutional diversity and drive innovation.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity for the HEA to take a leading role in setting the strategic direction of the system. It discussed the implications of the HEA's shift to a more regulatory role in the development of the framework.

**Decision:** The proposed approach to the development of the next Performance Framework for the higher education and research system was approved.

### 3.4.3 Proposal for a TU Roundtable

The Executive was asked to prepare a revised proposal for a strategy and leadership enhancement initiative following the feedback provided by the HEA Board and SDPM Committee on the previous Leadership Masterclass Series proposal. The revised proposal also reflects learnings from the emerging OECD '*Review of TU Academic Career Paths, Contracts and Organisation*'. Three themes were proposed;

- Disruptive thinking
- Strategic Planning and Sectoral Development
- Risk Management and mitigation

Ms Nugent advised that she had discussed with the Chair a forum for HEI Chairs in September 2022, which could provide a basis and launch pad for a programme.

Members raised the following points;

- The importance of a forum for the Technological Universities to meet and consider challenges specific to their sector. The CEO briefed members on current engagements with the TUs in relation to TURN.
- The importance of ensuring the right people attend the roundtable events.
- What institutions should the new TUs be benchmarking themselves against, rather than focusing on the traditional universities in Ireland there are more appropriate international comparators.
- The need to address structures in the TUs, the OECD report should help in this regard.

**Decision:** The Board approved the proposal for a TU Roundtable.

#### 3.4.4 OECD Review of TU Academic Career Paths, Contracts and Organisation

Thomas Weko presented the preliminary findings of the Review of TU Academic Career Paths, Contracts and Organisation to the Committee.

**Decision:** Members noted the Committee's report.

### 3.5 Report of Teaching and Learning Committee meetings held 26 January 2022 and 06 April 2022

3.5.1 Dr Ramsey presented the Committee's two reports noting that the focus has been on governance arrangements following the incorporation of the Forum's activities within the HEA last January.

#### 3.5.2 Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> January

Items considered at this meeting included the National Forum's accounts for Q3 2021 and arrangements for outstanding 2021 payments, process for managing the DELTA awards and arrangements following the move of the Forum to the HEA.

#### 3.5.3 Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> April

The CEO attended the TLC meeting of 6th April and provided an update on the recruitment and staffing structures for the Forum. It is expected recruitment of further senior posts will commence within the next five to six weeks. A subgroup was established to consider future management structures including secondments in specialist areas. Other issues considered included the T&L's finances, governance arrangements, the Delta Awards process and the National Seminar Series.

3.5.5 Members raised the following issues;

- Timeframe and criteria for new management structures
- Challenges with student engagement post Covid 19. What are the examination arrangements? Members were advised that they were primarily in person but there has been push back from some students towards online.
- Will student success continue to be a strategic priority, Dr Ramsey advised that it was anticipated that this would be a strategic priority when the new strategic plan is finalised.

**Decision:** Members noted the Committee's reports.

### 4. OECD thematic policy brief "Resourcing higher education in Ireland" Presentation by Mr Simon Roy, OECD

4.1 Mr Roy made a presentation which discussed the following topics:



- A comparison of the policy approaches in the jurisdiction with approach in other, similar OECD jurisdictions
- Identified potential strengths and weaknesses of the policy approaches
- Examined alignment of funding and costs in the Irish system as compared with similar systems
- Examined the extent to which the Irish model supported disadvantaged learners
- The report noted the gap in core funding for research and that Ireland has the highest student-to-staff ratio of OECD systems.

#### 4.2 Members raised the following queries:

- Are there funding systems which optimise the supports made available to students from disadvantaged backgrounds? Dr Roy noted that the Irish system for supporting students from disadvantaged students was relatively advanced. Ultimately it depends on how institutions apply the additional weighting provided for disadvantaged students.
- The relative merits of a fixed pot of funding and how it applies in the context where student numbers are allowed grow. Dr Roy noted that Ireland operates a flexible model, with institutions who opt to grow numbers benefiting from additional free fees revenue. This is as good a model as he has come across.
- The extent to which Ireland is reliant on fees from international students and whether higher education should be fully exchequer funded. Dr Roy noted that even the Nordic countries who have traditionally operated to largely public funded HE system are beginning to introduce international fees. OECD research indicates fully public funded systems are not necessarily the most equitable, ultimately it is about getting the right balance between public funding and private contributions.

### 5. Planning for TU Section 38 Processes - Memorandum A 17/22

5.1 Mr Conlon outlined the proposed process for Section 38 Technological University applications.

It is proposed that a sub-committee of the HEA Board is convened to undertake the assessment of a s38 application, chaired by the Chair of the HEA Board, and consisting of the Chair and non-conflicted members of the System Development and Performance Committee given its responsibility for the oversight of structural reform processes. The CEO noted the importance of the process being driven by the HEA Board. Members were advised that an application from St Angela's College to join the Atlantic Technological University was anticipated shortly.

**Decision:** Members approved the proposed establishment of a sub-committee of the HEA Board tasked with undertaking the compliance assessment in relation to Section 38 technological university applications. Additional international expertise may be co-opted on to the Committee where necessary.

## 6. Higher Education and the Creative Industries Report – Memorandum A 18/22 attached

6.1 Mr. David Smith, President of IADT delivered a presentation on the report to HEA under the Technological University Transformation Fund which discussed the following:

- Background- Having regard to the importance of preserving the distinct mission of IADT within the higher education landscape and in furtherance of the national technological university agenda, IADT was invited to submit an application for support under the Technological Universities Transformation Fund (TUTF). In September 2020, IADT were awarded €100,000 under the TUTF to support the exploration of the viability and appetite for the establishment of a creative arts university under the Technological Universities Act, 2018 or potentially by other means of association/recognition with existing HEIs.
- The findings of the research were presented as well as the opportunities and limitations of provisions under the Technological Universities Act, 2018 for specialist institutions such as IADT.
- Report explored the viability and appetite for the establishment of a creative arts university under the Act, or potentially by other means of collaboration with existing HEIs.
- The link between higher education and the creative industries and with the cultural sector needs to be prioritised when looking at future provision

6.2 Issues raised;

- The potential benefits of a stand-alone specialist institution rather than having art and design included within the remit of a larger institution. Mr Smith argued that while the former has merit there is justification for saying a specialist institution can be viable. The leadership role the IADT plays with the National Film School demonstrates this. The Institute is also leading on one of the two AHSS creative centres. The Institute's lack of a national standing can be confusing to some European partners.
- Linkages with other Irish HEIs. Mr Smith advised that IADT has concluded MoUs with NCAD and UCD. These institutions are more focused on the performing and visual arts. Ms Leahy noted the Institute has engagement with a range of other HEIs including NUIG, TCD, UL and TUS.
- What is the national demand for art and design graduates? Mr Smith noted the employment opportunities for such graduates were better in Ireland than the UK, the IADT in particular places great emphasis on design in its various programmes. The CEO acknowledged the need for further work to be carried out on the demand side.
- The extent to which IADT engages with development agencies such as Enterprise Ireland and IDA? Mr Smith advised that the Institute engages more with the former, although the IDA does get involved when larger employers such as Amazon and

Netflix visit the campus. Ms Leahy indicated that EI has been supportive in terms providing a range of grants and assistance with submissions.

- The Lifelong Learning opportunities for an institution such as IADT. Dr Patterson noted that many graduates as they progress through their career need to upgrade their qualifications and there was an opportunity for them to undertake micro-credential offerings. Mr Smith advised that IADT currently has 400 such courses many at level 5 and 6, UCD's courses are primarily at level 8. He also outlined pathways the Institute offers from Further Education.
- Plans for a major international conference. Mr Smith advised that the Institute has in the past hosted an international Film Summit.

6.3 Members agreed to consider the report and to consider its impact on the ongoing structural reform of the higher education sector. The future of institutes such as IADT needs further consideration is it within a larger TU or is there a place for specialist stand-alone institutions.

**Decision:** Members noted the report and the related presentation.

## 7. Presentation by Dr Pdraig Walsh, Chief Executive QQI

7.1 Dr Walsh in address to the Board noted the following;

- Role and responsibilities of the QQI - of particular interest to the HEA QQI accredits many Springboard courses offered by private providers.
- New responsibilities under 2019 legislation including providing the secretariat for the national academic integrity network.
- Memorandum of understanding between the HEA and QQI and key areas where both organisations collaborate including the TU application process, the forum on doctoral education and NSteP.
- QQI's quality assurance process (CINNTE), reports are published on QQI's website (universities since 2013, other public private since 2017, private providers from 2022). A review of TU Dublin has just been completed. The last CINNTE reviews of the current cycle are scheduled for next year – IADT, RCSI and UCC.

7.2 The following issues were raised by members;

- How might the new TUs become distinctive and successful entities? Dr Walsh noted the importance of the TUs continuing to provide courses at level 6 and 7. The TUs can also ensure their distinctiveness in providing apprenticeship education and providing services to local industry.
- The outcome of QQI's assessment of level 6 provision in the ETBs. Dr Walsh noted that QQI have carried out evaluations at all bar 3 ETBs. QQI noted the need to strengthen the capacity of the ETBs around programme development. There were pockets of very good practice across a number of the ETBs particularly around the

new apprenticeship provision. It was important that further education was seen as having benefit in its own right and not just as a pathway into higher education. A sectoral report will issue once the remaining ETB reviews have been completed.

- The extent to which the TU Dublin CINNTE review will provide an assurance to the HEA as regards the QA processes in the institution. Dr Walsh noted that the establishment of TU Dublin resulted in the coming together of two QA processes (DIT and FETAC). QQI will be examining the extent to which these processes are now integrated.

## 8. Executive Report

The following issues noted;

- Hybrid working plan for the HEA
- The Irish Research Council, together with HRB and SFI issued a joint statement on March 18 supporting the government's signing of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) statement on Ukraine and pledging to work individually and collaboratively to support researchers fleeing Ukraine. The funders are working with relevant stakeholders, including the HEA International section and the IUA, to examine options for how Ukrainian researchers can be supported on the projects funded by the agencies.
- The HEA is conducting a Second Gender Equality Review of Irish Higher Education Institutions over the course of 2022. A six-person Expert Group has been appointed to conduct the review, and the first meeting with the Expert Group was held on the 31st March.

**Decision:** Members noted the Executive report.

## 9. Members only

Members emphasised the importance of an ongoing connection between the board and HEA input to strategic national discussions.

## Next Meeting

Tuesday 14th June 2022

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Chairperson Date