

Higher Education Authority

Report of Special Meeting on HEA Strategy held on 7th December 2020 via teleconference

Present: Mr Tony Donohoe
Dr Bahram Bekhradnia
Dr Judith Eaton
Professor Orla Feely, Deputy Chair
Dr Sharon Feeney
Ms Lorna Fitzpatrick
Mr Michael Horgan, Chairperson
Ms Darina Kneafsey
Dr Deirdre Lillis
Dr Ronan Lyons
Dr Jim Mountjoy
Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan
Mr Pól Ó Móráin
Dr Lynn Ramsey
Dr John Wall

In attendance: Dr Alan Wall
Ms Orla Nugent
Mr Padraic Mellett
Mr Tim Conlon
Mr Peter Brown
Dr Vivienne Patterson
Ms Pearl Cunningham
Ms Nicki O’Connor

Conflicts of Interest

The Chair noted that a conflict of interest should not arise at this meeting.

Quorum

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

Disclosures

No disclosures were raised

Introduction

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting by noting that the focus of discussions should be on Corporate strategy for the HEA as distinct from a strategy for the HE sector. The 2011 National Strategy for Higher Education remains in place. He noted the importance of ensuring that the work of the HEA ultimately benefits HE stakeholders, most especially students. He referred to Minister Harris's recent address at an [IUA/NUI webinar](#) noting that many of the issues on the Minister's agenda have been under consideration by the Board for some time. He noted that the new Department has just commenced a consultation process on the development of its workplan and the HEA had been asked for input to this. He also noted the forthcoming new legislation which will give the organisation additional regulatory powers.

1.2 The Chair outlined issues facing the HEA;

- The need for robust education data
- Financial sustainability of higher education
- Equity of access
- The ability of the HEA to work with HEIs on the development of climate action plans.

1.3 The CEO advised that the purpose of today's meeting was for the Executive to hear from members what they saw as the key priorities. He noted that work of new HEA legislation was not progressing as quickly as he would like.

2. Issues raised by Members

2.1 Each Member outlined their key priorities and what they saw as a key enabler. Members outlined a range of issues including;

- Need to ensure the new HEC has the necessary resources and skills to fulfil its new mandate
- Climate sustainability – the possibility of a presentation from Arizona University was raised.
- Reformed HE governance
- Clarity as to the vision of the new HEC and the question of whether it can be both a regulator and an advocate for higher education
- Research – clarity as regards the role of the HEA and IRC
- HEA data management
- Enhance collaboration between further and higher education
- Ensure Irish higher education is adequately funded and is internationally competitive

2.2 The Chair thanked members for their wide-ranging contributions. He noted some of the priorities were more readily within the HEA's capacity to progress. It was noted that some issues were more strategic, others more operational in nature and some were non-corporate issues, but within the sectoral arena.

3. Next steps

3.1 The Chair advised that he will engage with the Executive on the list in advance of a full-day strategy meeting in January. This exercise will inform what priorities are within the HEA's capacity to undertake or influence in our dealings with DFHERIS. The impact of the pandemic on HEIs both short term and long term was raised. Mr Conlon referred members to a study [QQI](#) has undertaken.

Next Meeting

8th December 2020

Chairperson

Date