

UIC/P6/04

Universities UK

and

Universities Ireland

Meeting

24 September 2004
Royal Irish Academy, Dublin

Agenda and Briefing on Discussion Themes

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Agenda and timetable

Royal Irish Academy
Academy House, 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2

Friday 24 September 2004

9.30 am Welcome and introductions

Professor Gerry McKenna, Chair of Universities Ireland, Vice-Chancellor, University of Ulster
Professor Ivor Crewe, President of Universities UK, Vice-Chancellor, University of Essex

10 am Governance issues

Initial views:

Professor Ivor Crewe, President of Universities UK, Vice-Chancellor, University of Essex
Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski, President, Dublin City University

Discussion

10.45am Coffee

11.15 am Leadership issues

Initial views:

Dr Hugh Brady, President, National University of Ireland Dublin/University College Dublin
Professor Drummond Bone, Vice-Chancellor, University of Liverpool

Discussion

12 noon European issues

Initial views:

Professor Robert Boucher, Vice-Chancellor, University of Sheffield
Professor Roger Downer, President, University of Limerick

Discussion

12.45 pm Closing remarks

1.00 pm Lunch

Governance issues – Universities UK perspective

Speaker: Professor Ivor Crewe

The governance arrangements in place at HEIs in the UK have distinct features depending on the origins of the institution. The main differences in governance arrangements across the UK higher education sector, recent developments including the Lambert Review and the role of the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC) are outlined below.

Background

Higher education institutions in the UK are legally independent corporate institutions with a common purpose of providing teaching and undertaking research. The council or board of governors is the executive governing body of the institution and carries responsibility for ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development. It has the ultimate responsibility for all the affairs of the institution.

Typical position of a UK university in governance terms and main pre/post 92 differences

Universities established as universities before 1992, (1992 is significant as in this year the binary line that divided research-led universities and teaching-led polytechnics within higher education was removed and many polytechnics became universities) have their constitution and the powers of the governing body laid down in, and limited by, the charter and statutes of the institution. Most pre-92 institutions were established by royal charter with a set of accompanying statutes and are in effect chartered corporations. A few were established by a specific Act of Parliament and are statutory corporations. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were not established by Act or charter but have a body of statutes.

Universities established as universities in 1992 have their constitutions and the powers of their governing bodies laid down in the Education Reform Act of 1988. This Act established these institutions as higher education corporations, previously they were run by local education authorities. These institutions had articles of governance outlined by the then Secretary of State for Education. A few post-92 universities are companies limited by guarantee.

Main responsibilities of governing bodies

The main responsibilities of governing bodies in the UK are:

- Proper Conduct of Public Business – to ensure proper use of public and private funds
- Strategic Planning – considering and approving the institution's Strategic Plan
- Monitoring Performance – monitoring institutional performance against strategy and targets
- Finance – approving financial strategy/proper use of FC funds/ receiving and approving accounts
- Audit – internal and external audit
- Estate management – institution's land and buildings

- Charitable status – property and income only used for charitable purposes
- Staffing – responsible for the institution’s employment policy
- Student Union – In England and Wales governing bodies have to try to ensure that Student Unions operate fairly and their finances are sound
- Health and Safety

Governance issues

Over the last decade there has been an increasing focus on university governance with several government committees considering issues of governance

Nolan recommendations - 1996

These arose from the Second report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life – the Nolan Committee (now the Wicks Committee). Nolan’s aim was to promote common standards and expectations for local public spending bodies (including universities, FE colleges and grant-maintained schools) covering conduct, openness, accountability and independent scrutiny, together with common principles of regulation.

Recommendations

- Appointments to governing bodies should be made on merit, subject to the need to achieve a balance of relevant skills and backgrounds on the board – (now in CUC handbook)
- Key information in a common standard in annual reports – (now in CUC handbook)
- Guidance on limits of commercial confidentiality – (now in CUC handbook)
- Freedom of Speech and Whistle-blowing – (guidance produced)
- Independent Appeals body for students – (Office of the Independent Adjudicator established)

Dearing recommendations - 1997

The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, more commonly known as ‘Dearing’, looked at the management and governance of higher education institutions and identified three principles to underpin management and governance in higher education institutions. These were:

- institutional autonomy should be respected;
- academic freedom within the law should be protected, but needs to be managed responsibly;
- governance arrangements should be open and responsive.

Dearing proposed the following characteristics for governing bodies and their work:

- Unambiguous identity of the governing body
- Clarity of decision making

- Appropriate membership and size – appointed on merit, taking account of any necessary balance of expertise and interests and the institutions requirements, majority of lay members, limited terms of office, maximum of 25 members.
- Arrangements for engaging formally with external constituencies – an advisory court
- A rolling review of effectiveness of the governing body and institution – every five years, with performance indicators and benchmarks
- Reporting annually on institutional performance
- Arrangements to address the grievances by students and staff
- Effective academic governance

Typical changes in governing bodies since Dearing/Nolan

- 71% of universities have conducted reviews of their legal instrument of governance
- 94% of pre-1992 university reviews had resulted in submissions for amendments to the university's Charter and Statutes
- 80% of pre-1992 universities sought changes to, or a reduction in, the size of their governing bodies; some of the reductions were substantial
- All but a handful of the amendments put to the Privy Council have been approved and the Privy Council responded within 6 months on over 75% of occasions
- All respondents claimed that their university's governing body had legally unambiguous authority for the governance of the university
- Post –1992 universities have governing bodies of between 23 and 26 members. The range for pre – 1992 institutions is larger (20 to 72) but only 4 respondents have governing bodies larger than 38.
- 77% of lay members of governing bodies are between 50 and 70 years old, with very few younger than 40 or over 70
- Generally over 20% of the membership of governing bodies is female although most have fewer than 5% of members from ethnic minorities
- Most governing bodies meet 4 times each year. None meet on fewer than 3 occasions or on more than 7, except for special meetings
- Attendance at meetings is generally high, particularly among student and staff members
- Approximately half of universities have role descriptions for the governing body, chair and vice-chancellor/principal other than those contained in the Statutes or Articles
- Only 25% of pre-1992 universities review the effectiveness of individual members compared with 62% of post–1992 universities
- Between 3 and 9 committees report to post-1992 governing bodies compared with between 5 and 25 in pre–1992 universities, although the majority have between 8 and 12 committees
- 81% of pre–and 94% of post–92 university governing bodies have conducted “Dearing style” reviews of their effectiveness. These reviews covered a very wide range of issues and resulted in an impressive number of changes as a consequence.
- Governing bodies are typically comprehensively engaged in the strategic planning process.

These findings are drawn from a CUC survey of their membership.

Specifically in relation to effectiveness reviews:

Most popular topics for effectiveness reviews: Changes as a result:

Pre-1992 university

Committee structures
 Role, powers and duties of the Council
 Induction and training
 Strategy
 Relations between Council and Executive
 Size of Council

Pre-1992 university

Fuller and regular briefings of council members
 Enhanced/improved induction process for new members
 Changes to style of/greater clarity in council papers
 Adoption of more strategic overview
 Reduced size of Council

Post-1992 university

Committee structures
 Relations between Council and Executive
 Induction and training
 Role of the clerk
 Size of Council

Post-1992 university

Committee structure changed/simplified
 Clearer definition of roles/responsibilities
 Enhanced/improved induction process for new members
 Development of improved management information
 Reduction in number of committees
 Change to composition and Terms of reference of committees

Lambert Review

In his pre-Budget statement in November 2002 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced a review of university – business collaboration to be undertaken by Richard Lambert, former editor of the Financial Times. The review aimed to focus on the relationship between the business and higher education sector but the review also asked the business sector for its views on the current governance, management and leadership arrangements in universities and their effectiveness in supporting good research, knowledge transfer and providing relevant skills for the economy.

Universities UK provided a number of inputs to the review process including a number of meetings with Richard Lambert and consultations with members. The final report was published in December 2003 and its section on governance comments:

- Best practice in universities is impressive but the pace of modernisation varies widely
- Strong executive structures are being developed to replace committees and need not be at the expense of collegiality

- Institutions are generally reforming too slowly to reflect their increased size and complexity
- Large governing bodies are less effective than smaller governing bodies
- Risk-averse mentality leads to decisions by committee
- Need to allow space for entrepreneurialism
- Governing bodies should continue to develop key performance indicators and consider benchmarking
- Lack of trust by Government
- Universities need greater financial freedom and lighter touch monitoring

Lambert Review – Code of Practice

The Lambert Review suggested a Code of Practice for governing bodies should be developed by the sector and CUC to be adopted on a voluntary basis, although institutions will need to explain in their annual reports why they choose not to adopt it or parts of it and explain why their approach is more effective. The code of practice addresses a number of areas that have been highlighted in the previous Nolan and Dearing Reports. Examples include:

- The responsibility of the governing body
- Approval of the mission and strategic vision
- The role of the vice-chancellor as chief executive
- Governing body membership of 25 a recognised benchmark
- Majority of independent members
- Induction for new members
- Evaluation of governing body effectiveness every 5 years
- Use of relevant and appropriate performance indicators and benchmarks

The code of practice is currently in its final draft following considerable discussion with Universities UK. The final code will be released with the revised handbook for governors and the results of a research programme into good governance at a conference on 17 November 2004.

CUC – Committee of University Chairmen

CUC grew out of a small meeting of university chairs which was originally convened by the Chair of Council at the University of Nottingham in 1986. Later meetings were held under the title of the Committee of Chairmen of University Councils (CCUC). In 1988 the membership was extended to include all institutions represented on Universities UK. In 1993 the CCUC merged with the Standing Committee of New University Chairmen to form the Committee of Chairmen of University Councils and Boards (CCUCaB). In 1996 it adopted the present, more manageable, title of CUC. The Committee provides a forum for discussion for university chairs. It has developed a friendly and informal style which helps members discuss their ideas, concerns and problems with colleagues. At its meeting held on 16 April 1999 the Committee agreed the following statement of aims and objectives:

The purpose of the CUC is to bring together chairs of governing bodies of all universities in the UK with a view to:

- Securing the continuing autonomy and independence of universities in partnership with Universities UK.
- Assisting governing bodies to fulfil their responsibilities particularly in relation to strategy.
- Developing and enhancing good relationships between the university sector as a whole and appropriate external bodies in the context of the specific and strategic responsibilities of governing bodies.
- Promoting best practice in university governance and enabling such best practice and related topics to be examined under its auspices through seminars, publications, conferences and advice.
- To develop and maintain contacts with Ministers on strategic issues.

CUC representatives hold regular meetings with Universities UK

Universities UK Leadership, Management and Governance Strategy Group

Universities UK established a new group of members to focus on issues around leadership, management and governance in 2003 in light of growing interest in these issues arising from the Lambert Review and the White Paper on higher education. The terms of reference for the Leadership, Management and Governance (LMG) Strategy Group are:

- To establish and maintain effective links with the representatives of key external bodies with the general aim of raising the national profile and increasing the influence of UK universities;
- To develop a sector-based policy agenda within established Universities UK priorities for consideration by the UK Board;
- To promote general and sector-specific policies among sector bodies;
- To provide feedback to the UK Board on sector reactions to Universities UK policy positions;
- To maintain effective working contact with Universities UK nominees on sector bodies;
- To monitor progress of allocated sub-groups and to receive regular reports from them;
- To report regularly to the Executive Committee and once or twice a year on progress and future plans.

Additional objectives:

- To monitor and influence the development of the UUK/SCOP Leadership Foundation.
- To promote HE LMG to wider stakeholders and organisations
- To adopt a UK wide perspective on issues relating to LMG including the monitoring and influencing of funding council developments including the HEFCE Leadership, Management and Governance activities and the Good Management Practice Funding stream.
- To contribute to UUK policies and priorities in relation to LMG.
- To commission research and stimulate debate, in collaboration with others, on the topics of Leadership, Management and Governance.

- To maintain a watching brief on developments in other sectors.

The key areas of interest arising from the first meeting of the strategy group were:

- Management not Administration
- Management development of middle and front line management, and the importance of modernising management systems
- Modernising governance – a considerable number of issues relate to the importance of getting governance right
 - Governance skills
 - Understanding sectoral differences
 - Experience of other governance models
- Burden of and more importantly the effectiveness of accountability – including the regional impact
- Reputation and Trust
- Managing “creative space”
- Diversity issues
- Engaging students (in governance)
- Crisis Management and turnaround
- Public/Private, business aspirations, impact on balance sheet
- Interaction with external agencies
- What is the university and what does it mean to manage it?– first order issues and differing missions
- Innovation and risk taking with blame free public accountability
- The importance of stakeholders
- Issues of management processes relating to third mission activities (and impact on reputation)
- Swifter decision-making
- Mergers/collaboration and alliances
- An employment contract for a modern employee in a modern organisation – the natural link between leadership, management, governance and staffing issues
- Sharing good practice – taking time to unpack different practices and their pros and cons
- Importance of organisational structures – accountability, governance, relationship with stakeholders, career structures, delegation
- A regulated industry where volume, price and pay are all regulated
- Frameworks to support the role of managers
- The importance of anticipating needs and understanding high order influences
- The need to identify, anticipate and monitor legislation that will impact on higher education – national/international, current/anticipated.

Issues for discussion

- What is the university and what does it mean to manage it?

- Why should HEIs change their governance models?
- Why should HEIs move to the corporate governance model?
- Can corporate structures harness academic creativity?
- Why is the focus on the governing council rather than the academic Senate?
- While the rhetoric is diversity and voluntarism is the reality uniformity and compulsion?

Governance issues – Universities Ireland perspective

Speaker: Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski

The governance of Irish universities is regulated under the Universities Act 1997. The Act sets out the main functions of a university governing body and some basic rules about its composition and operation – more details are set out below.

The major features of the legislative framework are as follows:

- Sections 15-18 of the 1997 Act are the main statutory basis, with more details in Schedule 3.
- Section 16 of the Act specifies the membership, which can vary from 20 to 40 members; in practice, because of various university-specific provisions, the minimum membership will tend to be around 25 for each institution, but numbers closer to 40 are the norm.
- A significant proportion of governing body members have to be internal elected members. The remainder include students, graduates and various external appointments and nominees (including ministerial and local authority ones).
- Section 17 of the Act regulates the chairing of governing bodies – the section allows those universities in which, prior to 1997, the chief officer was the chair to continue this arrangement; in practice, nearly all now have independent chairs.
- Under section 18 of the Act, the only functions of governing bodies explicitly listed are the control of land and property, the appointment of the chief officer; and determining the body's membership.
- All members of governing bodies (apart from university officers and student representatives) must have terms of membership of between 3 and 5 years; they can be re-elected or nominated.

At the time of writing (which is just prior to the publication of the OECD review of higher education in Ireland) there is a degree of dissatisfaction with the operation of governance, partly (but not wholly) related to the following issues:

- university governing bodies are typically too big;
- internal representatives (mostly elected) tend to focus on detailed operational issues, often acting as an internal 'opposition';
- government and other public appointments and nominations to governing bodies have not always taken account of the need for relevant experience and skills;
- external members have not always been sufficiently engaged in the affairs of the universities;
- governing bodies have not tended adequately to 'own' university strategies;
- the practice of appointing independent chairs of governing bodies has only recently become more widespread;
- governing body members are often not aware of good governance practice.

In these circumstances, it seems likely that, over the period ahead, there will be pressure from various quarters to reform the system. The Chairman of the Higher Education Authority has indicated that this

will become an area in which the HEA will also become active. Whether serious reform is possible without a statutory amendment is not at present clear.

One objective of governance reform is likely to be the professionalisation of governing bodies, both in terms of membership and in terms of expertise, experience and skills. This in turn is made necessary not just by the dissatisfaction currently being felt in some quarters, but also by the need to take more closely into account recent changes in good practice in corporate governance. The OECD review, as mentioned above, is also likely to have an impact.

On the other hand, reform will be made more difficult by tensions within some universities, particularly those in which external participation in governance is seen as negative.

Leadership issues – Universities UK perspective

Speaker: Professor Drummond Bone

Leadership issues in higher education have become a key topic in the UK in common with increased emphasis on leadership issues across the public sector. The focus for leadership activities in higher education in the UK is now the Leadership Foundation and further details on its background and activities are found below.

Leadership Foundation

The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education was created in late 2003 and was formally launched in March 2004 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. The Leadership Foundation aims to draw on the best existing programmes and commission new material in order to offer world-class development in leadership, governance and management to current and future leaders within higher education institutions.

The Leadership Foundation was awarded £10M from the UK's four funding bodies for Higher Education to develop existing programmes in leadership for higher education and to improve the skills of higher education leaders, governors and managers.

Background

In 2001 a Steering Group, chaired by Professor Adrian Smith, Principal of Queen Mary, University of London commissioned research into leadership and management in higher education undertaken by Gus Pennington and Professor Robin Middlehurst. This project (funded by HEFCE's Good Management Practice programme) aimed to:

- Map the character, purpose and volume of management development provision for senior managers in UK Higher Education.
- Benchmark higher education practice against a sample of other public sectors and examine the extent of management development provision in some higher education sectors overseas.
- Explore the effectiveness of current provision for senior management development (through identifying measures used to judge effectiveness and by identifying factors that reportedly helped or hindered effectiveness).

In late 2002 the Steering Group proposed the establishment of a UK-wide Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and Universities UK and SCOP subsequently set up a strategic framework to take these findings forward, developing a business case for the creation of a new Leadership Foundation. In the DfES White Paper 'The Future of Higher Education', published in 2003 endorsed these developments and the four UK higher education funding bodies earmarked £10 million funding for three years to fund the Foundation.

An interim board, chaired by Professor Roderick Floud, Vice-Chancellor of London Metropolitan University, was set up by Universities UK and SCOP, to oversee the creation of the new Foundation

involving representatives from Universities UK, SCOP and the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC). The Leadership Foundation was incorporated in October 2003, as a company limited by guarantee and then also attained registration as a charity. In November 2003 James Ross was appointed as Chair of the Foundation Board and twelve further board members were appointed. In the same month Ewart Wooldridge was appointed as Chief Executive and he took up his post in January 2004.

Activities

The Leadership Foundation has begun to develop a programme of activities including a series of events focusing on areas such as 'Leading Construction Programmes' and 'Leaders working with Government'. Funding is also available for development projects in institutions in the areas of leadership, management and governance. The Leadership Foundation is currently seeking to appoint a number of associates, consultants and researchers to assist with the development of the Foundation's work.

Further information on the Leadership Foundation can be found at: www.leadership-he.com

Issues for discussion

- What current arrangements does the Republic of Ireland have for the development and training of its higher education leaders?
- What are the key issues and challenges facing higher education leaders in the Republic?
- How is leadership and management development capacity being enhanced to meet these challenges?
- Are there diversity and equality of opportunity issues similar to those in the UK?
- What is the policy and political framework for leadership issues in the Republic?
- How is leadership development organised within institutions both for academic and non-academic leaders?
- What steps are being taken to spot talent and develop future generations of leaders?
- What are some of the obstacles that institutions face in encouraging leadership and management development?
- Is there good practice in the Republic that UK universities could learn from? What has worked well?
- What funding is available for leadership and management development?
- Would institutions in the Republic of Ireland be interested in participating in the activities of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education?
- Universities UK has recently published guidance on senior appointments in higher education. What experience do institutions in the Republic have in terms of:
 - Use of headhunters
 - Succession planning
 - Diversity and equal appointments

Leadership issues – Universities Ireland perspective

Speaker: Dr Hugh Brady

- Leadership is about many things. In this brief presentation, derived from personal experience rather than the textbook, I will argue that it is primarily about continuing to say the same thing.
- If you asked ten Irish people who was the most effective communicator and leader of the past fifty years in their experience, I'd wager at least half would make mention of John Hume. And rightly so!
- But John Hume only ever said one thing: We will never achieve peaceful ends through violent means and we need to start talking to each other soon.
- So the good news is – leadership is simple!
- The bad news is – simplicity in terms of content doesn't mean simplicity of execution.
- Believe it or not, John Hume was never as popular as when he was coming to the end of his career – like every great leader, his greatest achievements were as frequently accompanied by personal vilification as by homage and reverence.
- It looks like a trade-off then: as leaders, we have an easy job to do in terms of content delivery – but we're all in for x years of calumny and vilification!
- And this is where I come back to where I began – my first assertion is that a leader is a woman or man who has the courage to sustain her or his message through good, bad and just downright confusing times.
- If we become dependent for our sustenance on the roar of the crowd and the smell of the greasepaint, we have already lost.
- There is of course a deceptive simplicity to the work of a John Hume. He was a master politician. It is no accident that I mention him again in moving to my next assertion: leadership is always about political judgement.
- Note what I do not say: I do not say leadership is political/politics but that it always involves political judgement – judgement about people as individuals and collectives, if you will.
- The supreme political judgement and one which any credible leader must master, I believe, is the judgement about what may be compromised and what is non-negotiable.
- Failure to master this makes of us petty Fausts or Dorian Grays. We all have our tales to tell of those who laboured hard to attain high office, but seemed at a loss about what to do once they had attained it.

- On the other hand, the tension of always anew having to make the judgement is inescapable. Camus' *Caligula* is perhaps the supreme literary rendering of the leader who tried to free himself completely from all bonds – and the madness accompanying that futile effort.
- We need to be humble too. Not many of us, as university leaders, will change the course of world history, perhaps not even institutional history. The cure for AIDS or cancer will not be found on all of our campuses, perhaps not on any.
- And to make another assertion in the mode of the *via negativa*, effective leadership is never about envy, about wishing it were otherwise. In fact, one of my predecessors was frequently heard to remark that he found envy the least understandable – and pardonable – of all the deadly sins, as it patently failed to give any pleasure to the perpetrator!
- To underscore the point about the need for humility, let me make brief mention of UCD's most celebrated graduate – one James Joyce.
- Less well known is the fact that *Ulysses* is the work of a failed medic! Given my current status, there are no doubt many here present who would be both quick and happy to describe me in similar terms. Joyce's biographer *par excellence* Richard Ellman puts it memorably: "His faculty of application to disagreeable subjects, which had sustained him at Belvedere [his place of secondary education], had diminished during his truant years at University College". In fact, Joyce's medical career was even shorter than my own.
- Joyce is remembered as a great writer, perhaps the greatest of them all. He is remembered as a great Irish figure and a great international figure. He is remembered as someone who was a leader, in a particular sense of the term.
- What I mean by this is that Joyce was and remains a leader in terms of ideas. And this is the leadership that we, university leaders, must embody. The battleground must be ideas and we must have the best ideas. It is by ensuring that we have the best ideas and deploy them with prudent judgement that we get beyond the sterile polarities of the managerial-scholarship false dichotomy which truly is the road to nowhere.

European issues – Universities UK perspective

Speaker: Professor Robert Boucher

A range of European issues arising from the Bologna Process and the EU have implications for the UK HE sector. Following a brief introduction to the newly established UK HE Europe Unit, this section of the paper provides a brief outline of the following policy matters:

- Existing qualifications within the Bologna Process;
- Quality assurance and qualification frameworks;
- European Credit and Transfer - accumulation - System (ECTS);
- The Bruges - Copenhagen Process on Vocational Education and Training;
- The Diploma Supplement and Europass; and
- Research issues.

It will be useful to gather views from colleagues in the Irish HE sector on these issues with a view to identifying shared areas of concern and agreement. With this in mind each section concludes with suggested points for discussion.

The UK HE Europe Unit

The UK HE Europe Unit is a three person sector-wide body which aims to raise awareness of the European issues affecting UK higher education institutions and to coordinate the UK's involvement in European initiatives and debates. Launched in January 2004, the Unit is jointly funded by Universities UK and the higher education funding councils for England, Scotland, and Wales. It has also received project funding from the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). In representing the sector as a whole it also works closely with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly. Further stakeholders who support the Unit include the UK Research Office, the British Council, the UK Socrates Erasmus Council, the Association of UK Higher Education European Officers and the Wellcome Trust. The Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, is also kept informed Unit activities.

The Unit has three primary objectives. First, it acts as a central observatory of European higher education and major research issues and informs all HEIs and stakeholders accordingly. Second, it seeks to coordinate UK involvement in European initiatives and policy debates. Third, where possible, it produces collective UK statements in key areas of EU policy, lobbying to support them as appropriate. In these ways, the Unit aims to strengthen the position of the UK HE sector in EU and Bologna Process policy-making forums.

The Europe Unit has established two main committees. The European Co-coordinating Group (ECG), comprising officers of key stakeholders, and the High Level Policy Forum, composed of heads of stakeholders. Both committees are useful forums to share information and reach UK policy positions on key issues. The Unit publishes a monthly newsletter on European HE, as well as Europe Notes which provide the sector with more detailed information on specific issues. The Unit has recently launched its website: <http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/home/>

Qualifications: Masters and Doctorates

Across Europe many HEIs are now moving from five- or six- year courses to a two cycle '3+2 model'. These are typically followed by doctoral studies lasting at least a further three years. Differences in the duration of the one-year second cycle offered in the UK compared to the two-year continental-norm have led to concern about recognition of the UK's Master's programme and the development of a myth that Bologna stipulates a 3+2+3 structure.

The UK emphasises that the Bologna Declaration did not define the number of years required to acquire a Master's degree, rather Ministers called for: "*Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The second cycle should lead to the Master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries*". Furthermore, the Berlin ministerial Communiqué states that, "*First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs*".

UK HE stakeholders also assert that the UK system is primarily based on learning outcomes, focusing on the competences a student acquires from a study programme, pointing to the international popularity of this qualification. Indeed the learning outcomes approach, in addition to **notional** time studied, is essential given the growing lifelong learning environment.

The UK has a flexible approach to preparation for research degrees. This can be within a longer Masters programme – typically leading to the MPhil, but other titles (including some MSc degrees) can also span two years and will include both advanced scholarship and training in research methods. However, the traditional pattern has been either direct progression from a specialised Bachelor degree to the PhD with training in research methods incorporated into the first year, and in practice some flexibility over the completion period to beyond three years, or the undertaking of a one-year Masters focussing on advanced scholarship followed by a PhD programme of up to three years. In the past decade, the Research Councils have pressed the sector to introduce one-year masters focussed entirely in training in research methods – the MRes; this can be followed by a PhD programme of (again) up to three years. The main constraint on length of degree at this level is funding. For part-time students, timing is much more flexible and the UK's emphasis on learning outcomes ensures that they achieve outcomes comparable with those of full-time students.

As doctoral level qualifications are introduced as the third cycle in the Bologna Process, the UK would also be concerned by efforts to stipulate an optimum length of the doctorate. There should also be flexibility in terms of the inclusion of doctoral training. UUK also strongly supports the EUA's current project¹ on sharing good practice in doctoral level studies across Europe.

¹ For further information please see: <http://www.eua.be/eua/en/Doctorates.aspx>

Key issues for discussion

- Do Irish colleagues agree that learning outcomes are the most important currency and tool for comparison of qualifications across the EHEA of diverse qualifications?
- Are there concerns in Ireland about the award of a one-year Master's qualification, either in Ireland or from UK institutions? Do Irish representatives agree that the one-year Master's is an important and successful qualification in the international market place?
- Do Irish colleagues believe that European discussions on the European doctorate should promote flexibility in the length and structure of the third cycle?

European credit transfer and accumulation

Ministers in Berlin, noting that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is "*increasingly becoming a generalised basis for ...national credit systems*" also "*encourage further progress with the goal that ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently...*".

Many in the UK support moves to a European credit transfer and accumulation system as it helps to facilitate mobility, which results in students' attainment of transnational experience, cultural maturity, and not least, language skills; all of which are increasingly required by employers in the European labour market. All the credit bodies in the UK acknowledge that 'credit' is a tool for expressing broad learning equivalence, measuring outcomes - currently, usually alongside notional student workload. It is awarded to a learner who achieves a verified achievement of a designated learning outcome acquired at a specified level. It plays an important role in rewarding the incremental progress of learners, facilitating student transfer, recognising prior learning, lifelong learning and contributing to the definition of academic standards.

The sector would however be reluctant to see the extension of a credit transfer system into a credit accumulation system which focuses only on notional learning effort or hours studied. This is because the basis of award, whether of credit or of a complete degree, should be the outcomes achieved. It is essential to use learning outcomes because they alone recognise different teaching efficiencies and the extent of student preparedness for HE. Credit accumulation should therefore consist of both a measure of the volume of outcomes achieved and a level, at which the credit is awarded, which must still relate to the intellectual demand upon the learner in successfully completing such a qualification. While the Communiqué does refer to learning outcomes, it is clearly an issue on which the UK HE remains vigilant.

Nationally, the UK's various credit systems recognise level and volume of learning and specify qualifications in terms of numbers of credits usually at two levels – broadly, that of the final assessment (approximately the year of study) and at a lower level, recognising that some ancillary components of a qualification will be at a lower level than those relevant to the main thrust. Comparing the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF²) with the credit consortia in England and Wales it can be seen that the total volume of credit specified for the Honours degree recognises the

² For further information on the SCQF, please see: <http://www.scqf.org.uk/home.aspx>

different usual starting points for Honours degree studies, with the Scottish system specifying 120 SCQF credits (one academic year for most full-time students) more than the rest of the UK – reflecting the different levels of Highers and A levels.

Measuring volume through notional time spent to achieve successful outcomes is currently the standard approach in all credit systems. This is often referred to the “typical” or “average” successful student. The UK is very much aware that these are approximate measures and that in an international context there is considerable ambiguity about what counts as notional learning time, different entry points and levels, and what kind of student is admitted, making the use of a flat or standardised time-basis problematic. Some in the UK have suggested that it would be more helpful to use ECTS as the basis of an exchange rate system to local credit values, using the standard academic year for full-time students as the basis of comparison: one fulltime academic year in ECTS being 60 ECTS credits aligning with 120 UK credits, on a 2:1 basis. Others on the continent have been concerned that such an approach could lead to over-valuation of programmes if countries have a relatively light workload, and the finger has been pointed at England on the crude basis of 30 weeks by 40 hours producing only 1200 hours of notional learning time. Equally we find estimates of 1600 – 1800 hours hard to understand. We also note that one study conducted for CEDEFOP on comparing vocational qualifications between countries has embraced the idea of an exchange rate mechanism.

Further UK sector concerns exist about the practical use of ECTS as an accumulation system across Europe. For example, we would not support calls for automatic recognition of credit awarded in other Bologna countries. The use of credit must also be accompanied with increased attention to coherence and retain a distinction between ‘general’ and ‘specific’ credit³.

Key issues for discussion

- Do Irish colleagues agree that ECTS used as a credit transfer and accumulation system should be based on learning outcomes as well as notional time served?
- Discussion on the deliberation of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland’s ‘Technical Advisory Group on Credit’ on the possibilities for the development of a system of credit and accumulation and transfer to complement the national framework of qualifications.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is an integral part of the Bologna Process on the basis that for the European Higher Education Area to become more attractive worldwide, a high level of quality in European HE is essential. The Berlin Communiqué identifies the need for action in quality assurance at institutional, national and European level, placing the primary responsibility for quality assurance *in HEIs themselves, as “this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework”*.

The Communiqué defines the responsibilities of *national* bodies involved in QA; evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students

³ Specific credit is relevant to a named final qualification.

and publication of results; a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures; and international participation, co-operation and networking. The UK supports the Bologna QA objectives at institutional and national level which broadly reflect UK QA arrangements.

At European level the Berlin Communiqué calls upon “ENQA⁴ through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to ensure an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies”.

UUK was pleased that efforts to introduce a formal pan-European system of external accreditation were resisted in the Communiqué. UK HE stakeholders have stressed that European quality assurance procedures should not be bureaucratic or burdensome by adding an additional layer of evaluation. We understand that ENQA proposes to put a set of standards procedures and guidelines to the Bergen summit, after consultation with EUA, ESIB and EURASHE. We are not clear however how this consultation is to be achieved.

While the UK appreciates why HE systems with similar QA arrangements may wish to co-operate in organisations such as the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)⁵ (of which Ireland’s Higher Education and Training Awards Council is a member), we would be concerned if this led to more pressure for Europe-wide QA – accreditation - arrangements which could be costly and over-intrusive. Especially given the UK’s experience of a previous system of subject-review.

The application of Bologna’s QA action lines to professional qualifications, where practice varies quite considerably across Europe, is unclear. In a number of continental countries, license to practice is included in the award of the HE qualification, whereas in the UK, an academic qualification is followed by participation in structured industrial training programmes or supervised professional practice in employment, resulting in membership of professional and statutory bodies.

We believe that most members of ECA provide long Master-type degrees which also confer statutory licence to practise in many regulated professions and that in this respect the mutual recognition of degrees within ECA would also amount to full automatic recognition of the associated licence to practise. This causes us some concerns as our professional formation process typically (although not exclusively) involves a post-graduation period of supervised practice in which the authority which accredits is the professional or statutory body rather than the HEI⁶. Our graduates could therefore face delays through the need to operate the EU machinery laid out in the Directives on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

⁴ ENQA is a European network aiming to disseminate information, experience, good practice and new developments in the field of higher education quality assessment and quality assurance. Its members are public authorities, associations of higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies. The UK’s Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is a member.

⁵ For further information on the ECA see: <http://www.ecaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=1>.

⁶ This became clear in the most recent Bologna seminar entitled ‘[Assessment and accreditation in the European framework which took place in Spain, Santander at the end of July](#). For further information on this event hosted by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation, see: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>.

It is clear however that the European Commission supports greater automaticity in the recognition of European professional qualifications, evident for example through its support for a project on a pan-European accreditation process for engineering. The European Commission is also expected to publish a recommendation on the implementation of the 1998 Council Recommendation on European Co-operation in quality assurance in HE shortly.

Qualifications frameworks

The Berlin Communiqué notes progress across European HE systems towards the implementation of the two-cycle system and sets the target of “2005 for all Ministries to have committed themselves to its establishment”. The Communiqué goes on to encourage Member States to set-up national frameworks of “comparable and compatible qualifications for their HE systems” which should seek “to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile”.

Furthermore it calls for “investigation of how shorter HE may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications framework; and for qualification frameworks for the European HE area to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of ECTS credits”.

The issue of credit systems was referred to in the UK White Paper (Future of Higher Education) and the issue is currently being considered by the ‘Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Scoping Group’, chaired by Professor Burgess. The Group is due to publish its report in the Autumn.

Ministers in Berlin also called for the elaboration of an “overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes⁷.”

Debate on the construction of this European Qualifications Framework is currently taking place in a sub-group of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. There appears to be broad consensus at the moment on the Dublin Descriptors⁸, which broadly equate to the UK’s qualifications descriptors. There has also been some progress in producing both generic and subject-specific competences, similar to the UK subject benchmarking statements⁹. UK engagement in this issue is essential to ensure that any future European framework, is overarching, flexible and not overly detailed to allow existing UK qualifications to articulate within it. A key issue for the UK is how extensive this European framework should be, in terms of including lifelong learning and vocational education and credit. Following the recommendations of the Prague seminar in 2003, the European Commission Director General for Education, Nicholas Van der Pas, recently announced plans to develop a credit based integrated

⁷ “First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral study.”

⁸ These are generic descriptors for qualifications at first and second (and third) cycle produced by the Dutch-led, Joint Quality Initiative. The QAA participate in this forum, for further information, see: <http://www.jointquality.org/>.

⁹ In the Tuning Project *op cit*.

system for lifelong learning, centred on ECTS, which links vocational education and training and higher education.

Furthermore as it is likely that the qualifications framework for Europe will be a framework of 'frameworks', it is not clear how a universally applied credit system (rather than an exchange mechanism between systems) would be incorporated.

Key issues for discussion

- Who should run the European QA system and on what principles should it be based? How can costs be contained? What are Irish views the two key Berlin QA issues: *"to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, and to ensure an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies."*?
- International expert participation in quality assurance reviews in other countries has been recommended by Bologna Process seminars. How feasible is this in terms of cost?
- What are the Irish HE sector's views on the Dutch proposal to establish a European classification of institutions of higher education to increase the transparency and visibility of Europe's higher education qualifications, similar to the HE Carnegie Classification in the United States?
- What is the Irish HE sector's view of the European Commission's involvement in the European QA debate, for example through its recommendation on European cooperation in QA expected shortly?
- As The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), is a member of the ECA how are European developments in this area received in the Irish HE sector?
- It is intended that the "overarching" European qualifications "framework of frameworks" will enable articulation of national frameworks and will assume or require them. UK is content with this approach but has not yet worked out how ECTS is to be operated within or alongside it. What are the perceptions elsewhere?
- Qualification frameworks are on the Bologna agenda now, with work proceeding on an overarching framework of frameworks. Our understanding is that the Commission is pressing for this eventually to embrace professional/vocational and academic pathways with ECTS built in - so that individual countries, if not the overarching system, would have integrated credit and qualifications frameworks. Is this the Irish understanding?

The Bruges - Copenhagen Process on Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Another key area of EU activity in the education arena takes place under the Bruges-Copenhagen Process. Stemming from Copenhagen Declaration on 'Enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training' (signed by 31 European Education Ministers in 2001) the Process mandates the EU to develop concrete actions in the fields of transparency, recognition and quality in VET. Tools to take forward this process include, a single framework for transparency of competences and qualifications; transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement; a system of credit transfer for VET; and common criteria and principles for quality in VET. The Process is seeking to contribute to the debate on the establishment of a European framework for transparency of qualifications. The European Commission is increasingly linking this Process with the Bologna Process for HE.

Key issues for discussion

- How to ensure Commission activities under the Bruges-Copenhagen Process, especially with regard to the creation of a European Framework of Qualifications, take place along side, and do not duplicate, the work of the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

The Diploma Supplement and Europass

The Berlin Communiqué states that “*every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge*”. The Diploma Supplement¹⁰ is a short document recording students' achievements and is widely used in European HEIs. The Supplement aims to improve transparency and recognition of qualifications and is designed to aid student mobility and contribute to the creation of the EHEA by 2010.

Institutions in the UK currently use a system of Progress Files to track student learning, the *Transcript* element of which is similar to Diploma Supplement. While the Transcript lacks some of the data fields required by the Supplement, much of the content in the Supplement and Transcript is the same.

There may be some cost implications for some higher education institutions in changing information management systems to produce the Diploma Supplement. The Europe Unit is working with stakeholders to support the introduction of the Diploma Supplement in UK higher education institutions.

The European Union's legislative process on the introduction of a single framework for the recognition of qualifications and competences is nearing completion. Entitled 'Europass', it will incorporate five already-existing initiatives, with a view to simplifying the qualification recognition procedure. The five documents are the European CV; the European Language Portfolio; the MobiliPass; the Certificate Supplement; and the Diploma Supplement. The programme also demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and new technologies by placing Europass on the internet, where users can update it

¹⁰ For further information on the Supplement, see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/rec_qual/recognition/diploma_en.html.

as and when they gain further qualifications. Europass is likely to be formally launched in December 2004¹¹.

Key issues for discussion

- Do Irish institutions share concerns about the financial implications for HEIs introducing Bologna reforms such as the Diploma Supplement?
- How do Irish HEIs intend to complete the on-line version of the Diploma Supplement templates (required by Europass)? What is the response to timetable and security and data protection issues, and the real challenges and system costs facing HEIs in producing the (electronic) Diploma Supplements?

Research

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) pays institutions a block grant according to the subjects, volume and quality of their overall research: the quality of research is assessed every seven years in a national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)¹². In addition, government funds for research are distributed by research councils, to whom universities bid for money for specific projects. Significant amounts of funding for research also come from charities, industry, and the health service.

The UK has a good participation record in EU Framework Programmes. UK participants were awarded 16 per cent of overall funds available in the 5th Framework Programme (FP5) and participated in 41 per cent of all FP5 projects. Participation from universities is particularly strong, with funding accounting for 25 per cent of the total for the sector.

Of the research submitted in the UK to the last Research Assessment Exercise (2001), 64 per cent was found to be of national or international excellence, a rise from 43 per cent at the previous assessment exercise¹³.

Sustainability of research is a crucial issue in the UK. Since January 2002 the Government has required HEIs to report annually on the full costs of research. Much progress has been made to develop robust cost models. The Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group (JCPSG) developed the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) system of financial management to meet these requirements. In the UK, under the terms of the requirements for Transparency (now explicitly part of institutions' Financial Memorandum with the English funding council), when institutions take on projects priced below their full economic costs, this should be done as a conscious decision, within the

¹¹ For further details see:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guestfr.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/04/14|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display

¹² The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) assesses the quality of basic research in universities and colleges in the UK to enable the funding bodies for England, Scotland and Wales to distribute public funds for research selectively on the basis of quality. It works on the principle that institutions conducting the best research receive a larger proportion of the available grant so that the infrastructure for the top level of research in the UK is protected and developed.

¹³ See *Technical Report* prepared for Universities UK by Evidence. The full text of this document can be found at:

http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/bookshop/downloads/funding_tech.pdf.

context of strategic objectives. Institutions are expected to recover in aggregate the full economic costs of all their activities across the full range of their activities. In relation to research, academic institutions have until September 2005 to implement new Office for Science and Technology (OST) full cost guidelines on the costing of Research Council funded projects. Recent predictions suggest that even with extra research council resources allocated as part of the 2002 spending review, an extra £900 million a year would be needed to sustain the current number of project grants (from charities as well as research councils) just in England under the current dual support system¹⁴. Without additional investment this could lead to a reduction in the volume of research projects supported by universities.

It should be noted that the Scottish Executive provided funds to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) for a pilot scheme to provide limited financial support for the preparation of Network of Excellence (NoE) or Integrated Projects (IP) proposals under EU Framework Programme Six.

Another major issue in the UK is that of research concentration. Using a very narrow definition of research, the latest figures show that 84 per cent of research council grants go to 25 universities, while 75 per cent of Higher Education Funding Council for England grants go to 25 institutions. A little funding is also directed specifically to supporting collaboration with industry and knowledge transfer which might count as research in other parts of Europe. There is widespread support in the UK for the principle of funding excellent research wherever it is found, and of funding collaborative research of international excellence. However, it is essential that such support is not provided at the expense of research of national excellence, which can greatly assist regional economic development through interaction and knowledge transfer with local business. Excellent research in the arts, humanities and social sciences is found across the sector and does not require greater selectivity or critical mass. Research conducted on behalf of Universities UK has outlined the potentially damaging effects that further concentration may have on the research base and the economic and regional importance of HE. Furthermore, institutions benefit from the vital interdependence of teaching and research and increased concentration of funding could jeopardise this important link. In the UK there is a consistent use of recent research findings to enrich the curriculum across all subject areas.

Key issues for discussion

- What is the Irish experience of EU Framework Programme funding? What would Irish universities like to see in the 7th Framework Programme?
- What are Irish universities' views on the creation of a European Research Council (ERC)?
- How do Irish universities meet the full economic costs of Framework Programme research projects?

¹⁴ Public research funds in the UK are provided under a dual support system. The higher education funding councils provide funding to support the research infrastructure (i.e. the cost of salaries of permanent academic staff, premises, libraries and central computing costs). The Research Councils provide for direct project costs and contribute to indirect project costs. The general funds provided by the Higher Education Funding Councils also support basic research in institutions and contribute to the cost of training new researchers.

European Issues – Universities Ireland perspective

Speaker: Professor Roger Downer

Bologna Process

A national steering group has been established in the Republic of Ireland to oversee the implementation of the Bologna Process. It is chaired by the Department of Education and Science and has nominees of the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities [CHIU], the Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology [CODIT], the Dublin Institute of Technology [DIT], the Higher Education Authority [HEA], the Higher Education and Training Awards Council [HETAC] and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland [NQAI]. A number of national conferences have been held to discuss and promote the process.

In general the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna Process has not registered as a high priority item for Irish universities. This may relate to a perception that the main motivation for the process was to bring higher education systems in continental European countries into line with arrangements already in place in the UK and Ireland. While Bologna interest and activity in the university sector has increased, a detailed sectoral position on the implications of European developments has not been formulated.

Qualifications: Masters and Doctorates

- Irish Universities and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland [NQAI] would strongly support the emphasis in the UK universities that three plus two plus three is a myth. There is no definitive number of years required to attain any award within the Bologna system.
- Irish universities have already incorporated learning outcomes within the generic descriptors for the different types of awards which they use and have agreed this with the NQAI. Irish universities and the NQAI are considering the use of learning outcomes for individual awards, and it might be worth considering ways in which Irish universities could work with UK colleagues in advancing this.
- In relation to a one-year programme leading to a Masters qualification, we see no reason why this should not be continued where universities desire it. The Bologna structure needs to be flexible enough to allow programmes of different durations to exist, and indeed should really not concern duration directly.
- In relation to the issue of the Doctoral descriptor, Irish universities consider that the length and structure of the cycle and of programmes is a matter for individual institutions, and that an over-arching structure should only be about having generic outcomes defined.

European Credit Transfer and Accreditation

- In relation to European Credit Transfer and Accumulation, Irish universities would be concerned that concentration on an outcomes-focus to the developing European system of credit would delay consideration and implementation of credit accumulation and transfer systems. At the same time, a pragmatic approach needs to be adopted as to how much of

this can be incorporated on an initial basis. In inputs it has made to the processes, the NQAI has supported the development of outcomes associated with the credit system, and indeed of levels within the credit system. This is very much in line with the views of the UK universities.

- The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland technical advisory group on credit is advancing its work and the Authority is about to issue a draft guidelines document for the use of credit within higher education for consultation. The universities have yet to formulate a detailed position on credit use within the sector.

Quality Assurance

The principles and methodology of the Irish universities quality process are in agreement with those of the Bologna process as reiterated in the Berlin Communiqué by Ministers responsible for higher education, where they stress that “consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework” (*Berlin Communiqué, September 2003*). The principles are also totally in harmony with the best practice principles of the European University Association (*EUA Graz Convention, May 2003*). The Irish Universities Quality Board [IUQB] was involved at an official level in all the national committees and conferences that prepared the Irish position for the Berlin Conference of Ministers.

QA principles

Irish higher education institutions co-operate under the auspices of an ad hoc group termed the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN) (This includes participation from the Department of Education and Science [DES], Higher Education Authority [HEA], Conference of Heads of Irish Universities [CHIU], Irish Universities Quality Board [IUQB], Higher Education Training and Awards Council [HETAC], Dublin Institute of Technology [DIT], Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology [CODIT] and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland [NQAI]). Consistent with and building on the national legislation on QA (described below), the IHEQN has been working on developing:

- (a) A set of common principles of good practice in QA/QI for Irish higher education and training (including the publication of review reports and institutional guidelines for review);
- (b) A set of common principles for reviewing the effectiveness of QA procedures.

Agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on QA

In essence, IHEQN has therefore been working towards an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on QA for the Irish higher education system (consistent with primary legislation). For the universities, QA legislation prescribes evaluation (as opposed to accreditation) of Departments and Service Units followed by institutional audit (review of the effectiveness of QA procedures). The legislative audit function has been delegated by the universities to the Irish Universities Quality Board. IUQB intends to apply for membership of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Our information is that the emerging position at European level in relation to the agreed set of standards is that Irish universities should not have much difficulty with these. The working group in this

area is chaired by Peter Williams of the UK Quality Assurance Agency, and he seems to be trying to ensure there are no difficulties with the autonomy of institutions in this work.

The peer review system for quality assurance and / or accreditation agencies is also developing in the context of the development of the role of ENQA. We would consider that there is a need to ensure that in the development of this approach, all Irish stakeholders are appropriately involved and can input. There is a need to ensure that a super agency is not introduced.

Running of European QA system

Irish universities believe that the way forward on a European basis is through the mutual (bilateral or multilateral) recognition of member agencies by bodies such as ENQA (by fulfilling the new membership criteria on independence from government etc.). In that sense, the European QA system does not need to be “run”, but can function as a set of cooperating agencies fulfilling criteria and working together on issues of common interest.

Irish universities are in favour of an evaluation rather than an accreditation system, based principally on the review of academic and service departments, rather than subject-based reviews, followed by periodic institutional audit.

Peer review system for accreditation (evaluation) agencies/bodies

All agencies which fulfil the ENQA membership criteria must agree to a QA peer review system of accreditation (or evaluation) agencies or bodies. ENQA must develop a system for ensuring the QA procedures of its member agencies. This could be carried out by ENQA contracting a number of bodies to do this (CHEA, one of the American regional accreditation bodies, EUA, EURASHE.)

Costs

The review system for the Irish QA agencies (such as IUQB) should be based on a cyclical evaluation of the agency (every 7 years or so, following a full cycle of institutional audit of the 7 Republic of Ireland universities). This frequency of evaluation should control costs.

International Participation

Irish primary legislation on QA (Universities Act for universities and Qualifications [Education & Training] Act for institutes of technology and Dublin IT) requires a peer review system composed of “evaluation by persons who are competent to make national and international comparisons”, so the institutions do not have discretion. In any event, Irish universities have always supported the use of international peers in reviews, be they for departmental or institutional reviews. Appendix 5 of the CHIU publication *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities* (<http://www.chiu.ie/Quality.pdf>) lists reviewers from 16 countries used by Irish universities in quality reviews.

Universities use one-off reviewers rather than the British system of trained panels. The only additional cost to using international reviewers is the cost of air fares (for Britain, Continental Europe and the East Coast of the USA, this does not add much).

Dutch Proposal

On the Dutch proposal to establish a European classification of institutions of higher education to increase the transparency and visibility of Europe's higher education qualities, Irish universities were not aware of this proposal during Ireland's recent presidency of the EU. However, if there is to be a list of institutions and awarding bodies which are legitimate in each state, this would be a help in ensuring that there are no bogus providers of higher education and awarding bodies operating. Irish universities are aware that the Department of Education and Science is looking at this as a policy issue.

Irish legislation limits the use of the word "university" in an institution's title to the seven self-awarding institutions. The variation in "quality" between Irish universities is probably smaller than elsewhere. The range of student numbers for the seven universities is 4,400 to 14,600 for undergraduates, 1,100 to 5,500 for postgraduates and 40-260 for annual Research Postgraduate Degree output. There would probably be little variation in the HE Carnegie classification for Irish universities.

European Commission

Consistent with the comments above in relation to mutual recognition of QA agencies, the Irish universities' view is that Bologna (and QA elements therein) should be pursued by national governments (informed by national legislation, national QA systems and national HE sectors) through the relevant national Ministries rather than the European Commission. The Commission is already a player, but should only facilitate and not dictate developments.

In relation to the European Commission's involvement in the European Quality Assurance debate, the key issue will be the nature of the draft recommendation on cooperation and quality assurance. Irish universities have not been involved with the work of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education of which the Higher Education and Training Awards Council [HETAC] is a member. There is probably a need to pay closer attention to developments.

Qualification Frameworks

- In relation to qualifications authorities, we would generally be supportive of the view of the UK universities that the European Qualifications Framework needs to be generic. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland is inputting into this process. We understand from the Authority that the likely outcome is that there will be no subject specific element to the over-arching European Framework of Qualifications as it is not appropriate, and that subject specific areas, if any, should be included in national arrangements. In effect, the emerging picture seems to be that National Frameworks are set to have arrangements that would relate to the over-arching Framework. The NQAI would favour the over-arching Framework being extended to include all learning – including schools, vocational education and training – but recognise that this would take some time.
- In relation to the operation of ECTS within or alongside national frameworks of qualifications and the overall Framework, the NQAI would not see a difficulty. Both the over-arching group and the ECTS coordinators are moving towards increased use of credit, levels within credit,

and outcomes-linked credit. Irish universities have not worked through the implications and would be concerned about the potential for mistaking “shadow for substance”.

- There is questioning about the understanding of the Commission in relation to frameworks of qualifications embracing professional, vocational and academic pathways with ECTS built in. The NQAI would favour an over-arching approach which would bring together the various dimensions of qualifications and the various sectors. The Authority recognises that the extent to which ECTS is built-in or linked needs to be further developed. Again universities have not examined the implications.

Linking with Copenhagen process

- The NQAI has been very supportive of links between the Copenhagen process and the Bologna process, and favours bringing together the work in the Copenhagen process and qualifications frameworks, and the work in the Bologna process. Care needs to be taken that neither of the two processes become dependent on the other or are slowed down by lack of progress in the other. The universities have only been peripherally involved in work on the Bruges-Copenhagen process.
- The Europass mobility tool came out of the Copenhagen process and is now being adopted generally for education and training. The NQAI sees this as a very positive element and would have responsibility for co-ordinating its implementation in Ireland when it is formally adopted.

Professional Accreditation

- There is some discussion in relation to professional accreditation, both national and European. The NQAI is not aware of the European Commission view as set out in the UK paper. Perhaps there may be a misunderstanding here. The misunderstanding may relate to the difference between accreditation of a higher education programme or award within a higher education structure, and professional accreditation. The position in Ireland in the university sector is virtually the same as the position in the UK in relation to professional bodies. Similarly in the HETAC sector Higher Education and Training Awards Council awards are accredited by professional bodies. Accreditation for professional courses is provided by a variety of professional bodies. In some cases bodies have statutory authority to licence the right to practice, in other cases bodies operate on moral authority – in the latter cases accreditation by the professional body is not legally required in order to practice.

Transparency

The Department of Education and Science has adopted a very consultative approach to the introduction of the Diploma Supplement and has ensured that issues that arise can be addressed. The Diploma Supplement is being piloted in a number of institutions at present including one university.

Debate has continued on the possibility of including the so-called 'ECTS grade' in the Diploma Supplement issued by the universities. The universities have agreed that the inclusion of an ECTS grade is important for students, but have rejected the norm-based methodology for the calculation of the grade suggested by the ECTS National Co-ordinators (a group organised by the EUA under contract to the European Commission). Instead, they have provisionally agreed to translate the standard honours grades 1, 2.1, 2.2, 3, and pass to A, B, C, D, E respectively.

The universities have committed to introducing the Diploma Supplement at a national level on Europass, but this is only at a preliminary stage. The situation regarding Transcripts and Diploma Supplements in Irish universities is similar to that described for UK universities:

- The cost and other implications of introducing the Diploma Supplement for management information systems is being examined as part of the pilot project;
- Irish universities are concerned about the cost implications of introducing Bologna reforms particularly in the current funding climate.

Research in Irish Universities

Universities are funded by a core grant from the Department of Education and Science, administered by the Higher Education Authority, to cover teaching and research. Academics' salaries cover the cost of teaching but also allow them to carry out research. In this way a significant amount of research academic time is covered by the core funding for universities. Note that core funding provides only very basic support for research, primarily academic time.

Over the past six years there has been a major change following the change in government policy to provide major funding for research in Ireland: €2.5bn in the National Development Plan. The scale of this endeavour can be understood when one thinks that in 1997 the state invested €24m in R&D, in contrast to €422m in 2001. The four funding lines that are of major importance to the universities are the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL), Science Foundation Ireland, the Humanities & Science Research Councils and the Health Research Board.

In terms of quality, it is very important to stress that all of our research funders use international peer review for proposal evaluation and programme impact assessment. This is essential given the small size of the Irish research community and has the advantage of benchmarking Irish scientists against international standards. Data from the EC Innovation Scoreboard 2002 shows that while Irish publications per scientist rank at tenth in Europe, the impact of Irish science ranks fifth behind the UK, Netherlands, Denmark and the US.

The issue of covering the full economic costs of research has not been resolved. A report on research overheads (2003) made clear recommendations (following the US system), but despite this most of our funding agencies do not pay overheads (Science Foundation Ireland is the exception with a 30% overhead).

It is very important to stress that there has not been a coordinated national plan for supporting research *and* the universities.

There have been a number of recent reports that assess progress to date and make clear recommendations for the future:

- **Enterprise Strategy Group – “Ahead of the Curve”**
 - *More funding for industry led research*
 - *Increased exploitation of commercial potential of R&D*
- **PRTL Impact Assessment Report**
 - *Quality of research has increased*
 - *Sustainability planning for centres*
 - *Improved knowledge transfer*
- **Building Ireland’s Knowledge Economy**
 - *Doubling of public and private investment in R&D*
 - *Increase in number of researchers by 8000 in 2010*
- **Expert Group in Future Skills**
 - *Deficit in the number of researchers*
 - *Need to train more nationally*
 - *Need to attract more from abroad*

The universities welcome and support the recommendations of these reports.

Challenges for the future

- Sustainability of R&D programmes;
- Attract and retain researchers;
- Create research paths;
- Greater investment in postgraduate education required to train more researchers for academia and industry;
- Physical infrastructure and operations;
- Need for a sustained cycle of funding based on competition and international benchmarking;
- Maximising the knowledge transfer from this large public investment (technology transfer, commercialisation, application of social and economic policy);
- Support Irish enterprise in solving key problems and building national enterprise research capacity;
- Encouraging industry to make greater investments in R&D.