



Comptroller and Auditor General
Special Report

Irish Universities

Resource Management and Performance

September 2010

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This report was prepared on the basis of information, documentation and explanations obtained from the public bodies referred to in the report. The draft report was sent to the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Finance, the Higher Education Authority, the Irish Universities Association and the seven universities referred to in the report. Where appropriate, the comments received were incorporated in the final version of the report.

The website of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General is the primary means of publishing reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General presented to Dáil Éireann. Should any errata arise they will be corrected and noted in the report published at www.audgen.irlgov.ie.

Abbreviations used are explained at the end of the report.

Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Irish Universities – Resource Management and Performance

I have, in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993, carried out examination of resource management and performance in Irish universities.

I hereby submit my report on the above examinations for presentation to Dáil Éireann pursuant to Section 11 of the said Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Buckley', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

John Buckley
Comptroller and Auditor General

10 September 2010

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Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings

Third level education in Ireland is provided through seven universities, 14 institutes of technology and a number of other institutions designated under the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971. This examination reviewed the arrangements for funding in universities, the progress in providing better cost information, the changes in the organisation and delivery of teaching, the outcome of quality reviews and issues relating to remuneration and pensions noted in the course of financial audit.

Funding in Universities

Up to 2006, a unit cost allocation model was used to distribute the core recurrent grant from the State. There were considerable delays in generating cost data used as part of that model. In 2006, a new grant allocation model was introduced by the Higher Education Authority. This new model – the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model – allocates funding based on the type and resource intensity of courses.

€742 million of the 2009 allocation of €921 million was allocated for recurrent purposes and distributed using the grant allocation model.

The model is being introduced on a phased basis and the full redistributive effect has not yet occurred as an interim moderating mechanism, which dictates the extent of change in distribution between universities was subsequently introduced. In addition, a strategic performance funding component aimed at improving strategic management in universities has not been brought in. Continuous refinement of the model is likely for some time.

Accountability and Audit Arrangements

Under Section 39 (2) of the Universities Act 1997, I am the statutory auditor of Irish universities. Separately, the governing authorities appoint auditors to carry out a full audit of their financial statements. In order to avoid duplication, in completing my annual audit of the financial statements, I rely on the work carried out by the internally appointed auditors in the universities who complete their audits in accordance with international auditing standards.

Going forward certain adjustments are desirable to the current arrangements for the conduct of my annual audit of the financial statements. In particular, the introduction of formal arrangements between my Office and the universities which clearly set out, for example, the level of access by my Office to the working papers, reports and management letters of the externally appointed auditors. I consider that this would be best achieved by the inclusion of appropriate terms in the contracts between the universities and their external auditors.

Costing of Services

Work is underway on developing and implementing a full economic cost model designed to allocate all university costs to the primary activities of the university and produce consistent and comparable information across all universities.

However, there has been a delay in producing the first full set of economic cost data. The main reason for this is that the filling out of the Academic Activity Profile form, which allocates the pay costs of academic staff to the activities of the university, is not mandatory so not all academic staff complete it. In the absence of this data any emerging cost data is not reliable. Getting full value for investment in this new model depends on its universal deployment.

Teaching Organisation and Approaches

In recent years, universities have introduced a number of initiatives aimed at providing greater flexibility and choice to students. The initiatives undertaken include

- the adoption of the European Credit Transfer System¹ (ECTS) to allow for credit accumulation and ease of transfer of students between universities in Ireland and abroad
- supporting this with modularisation and semesterisation²
- providing in certain instances for more elective modules associated with core course content.

Changes have also been implemented to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning for students including

- the increased use of educational technologies
- alterations in teaching methods, for example, enquiry and problem-based learning, peer assisted learning and group work
- increased focus on learning outcomes
- changes to assessment methods.

There would be merit in evaluating the various initiatives in the area of teaching and learning in order to determine their potential contribution to improving learning outcomes, achieving cost-effective delivery and extending access and retention.

Quality Assurance

Reports from the first cycle of institutional quality reviews conducted during the period 2004/2005 were published in 2005.

This examination reviewed the responses of the universities to the recommendations and it noted that good progress has been made by the universities in implementing the recommendations. Details are outlined in Appendix C.

Remuneration Matters

In the academic year 2007/2008 the salary costs of the universities exceeded €1 billion. While universities have authority to determine the number and grading of staff, the Minister for Education and Skills, with consent of the Minister for Finance, must approve the salary scales applied by each of the universities. In the case of senior staff, the Minister takes account of the recommendations of the Review Body on Higher Remuneration.

In the course of audit, a number of instances were noted where universities did not strictly adhere to the requirement for ministerial sanction. For example, in some universities the remuneration of

¹ ECTS is a European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System which is used across Europe for credit transfer (student mobility) and credit accumulation (learning paths towards a degree). Credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components (such as modules, course units, dissertation work, work placements and laboratory work).

² Modularisation and semesterisation involve moving from a stage-based structure (normally an academic year) to one based on modules and semesters. A module is a self-contained unit of learning with defined learning outcomes, workload and credits as defined by the ECTS. A semester is a period over which a module is delivered with most universities having two semesters per academic year.

senior staff exceeded the approved levels, unapproved allowances were paid and certain performance related bonuses were paid without the required approval.

In general, steps have been taken to cease the extra payments. However, in most instances these decisions have not had retrospective effect.

Issues that need to be clarified include

- the definition of total remuneration and, in particular, whether and to what extent recourse to trust funds is permissible.
- starting pay rules – it was noted that new appointments were made at various points on existing salary scales above the minimum starting point in one university.

Staff in universities are permitted to engage in consultancy work provided it does not exceed a certain percentage of their working time. There would be merit in reviewing the arrangements for the monitoring, control and evaluation of this activity so as to ensure that value accrues to the university for the expenditure incurred while staff engage in this work. In particular, the value of the university remunerated time that is associated with this activity should be captured. It would also be useful if the commercial value of the consultancy were captured and the overall issue of intellectual property rights clarified.

Pension Matters

In the public service, where certain professional or technical staff are unable to qualify for a full pension based on 40 years service by retirement age they can apply to have years added to their service for pension purposes. The situations where individuals would be unable to qualify for full pension can arise

- where a minimum number of years experience are required for appointment or
- the minimum entry age specified in a competition is over 25.

In universities, there is some doubt about the extent to which some additional payments resulting from awards of added years have become *de facto* entitlements of the staff.

The Attorney General has advised that in certain instances they may have become entitlements through statements made or commitments given to staff by universities. The Department has indicated that work is underway to identify all sets of circumstances where *de facto* entitlement exists.

With the transfer of university pension funds to the National Pensions Reserve Fund under legislation enacted in 2009, all discretions to award added years that existed prior to the transfer will continue to exist, however, they will now be exercised jointly by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Finance, pending the delegation of this function to the HEA.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

1.1 Third level education is mainly delivered through seven universities, 14 institutes of technology and a number of other institutions which are funded directly by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and by the Department of Education and Skills (the Department).

1.2 Third level institutions are funded from a number of sources

- grants through the HEA towards the cost of teaching, capital development and research¹
- capital funding from private sources through tax incentives
- research funding from public bodies other than the HEA
- fees and student service charges.

1.3 The Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 provided for tax relief to private investors for the construction of research infrastructure. Section 50 of the Finance Act, 1999 gave tax breaks to private investors in respect of capital spending relating to student accommodation.

1.4 In the academic year 2008/2009, there were almost 186,000 students in the higher education sector. These were distributed as outlined in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Students in Higher Education 2008/2009^a

Name of College	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
UCD	18,104	4,340	22,444
UCC	15,076	1,326	16,402
TCD	13,506	1,982	15,488
NUIG	12,549	2,753	15,302
UL	9,345	1,161	10,506
DCU	7,618	1,965	9,583
NUIM	6,100	1,176	7,276
Total Students Attending University	82,298	14,703	97,001
Institutes of Technology	55,423	22,220	77,643
Other Institutes ^b	8,928	1,970	10,898
Total	146,649	38,893	185,542

Notes:

a This figure includes students in HEA designated institutes only.

b Other Institutes comprise the following colleges – Mary Immaculate College, St. Patrick's College, Mater Dei Institute of Education, St. Angela's College, National College of Art and Design and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

¹ The HEA does not fund the capital requirements of the institutes of technology. The capital requirements of the institutes of technology are directly funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

Scope and Methodology

1.5 This review, which was conducted as part of the ongoing financial audits of university financial statements and by way of follow-up inquiries with third level institutions, supervising Departments and the HEA, considered

- the arrangements for funding of universities, distribution of the funding within the universities and for public accountability
- the progress in providing better cost information by universities, changes in the organisation and delivery of teaching and the arrangements for quality assurance
- matters arising out of the audit of remuneration and pension payments.

Structure of the Report

1.6 The results of the audit reviews are set out in the four chapters that follow. Chapter 2 examines the arrangements for university funding and accountability. Chapter 3 examines the extent to which universities are positioned to cost their activities and quality assure their operations. It also considers changes in approaches to teaching and training. Chapter 4 considers some remuneration matters that arose out of audit examination, while Chapter 5 examines the discretionary award of added years in the course of pension determination.

Future Higher Education Strategy

1.7 In February 2009, the Minister for Education and Science established a process to develop a new national strategy for higher education. The process, which is being led by a high level strategy group drawing on national and international expertise, is examining how well Ireland's higher education system is performing, how well existing resources are being used and how the system can be reconfigured to best meet the many challenges it faces over the next decade having regard to the role it has to play in contributing to Ireland's economic recovery.

1.8 It is envisaged that the strategy will provide a vision and related set of national policy objectives for Irish higher education over the coming 20 years and identify the operational framework for the higher education system which will enable it deliver these objectives.

1.9 Details of the seven universities and 14 institutes of technology are outlined below.

Universities

University College Dublin
University College Cork
Trinity College Dublin
National University of Ireland, Galway
University of Limerick
Dublin City University
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Institutes of Technology

Athlone Institute of Technology
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
Institute of Technology Carlow
Cork Institute of Technology
Dundalk Institute of Technology
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Dublin Institute of Technology
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Letterkenny Institute of Technology
Limerick Institute of Technology
Institute of Technology Sligo
Institute of Technology Tallaght
Institute of Technology Tralee
Waterford Institute of Technology

Chapter 2

Funding and Accountability of Universities

Funding and Accountability of Universities

2.1 This chapter examines the amount and nature of funding provided to universities, how that funding is allocated by the HEA and the methods used by universities to allocate funding and schedule resources internally. It also examines the application of student services charges in third level institutions² and reviews the arrangements for accountability and audit of universities.

Funding of Third Level Institutions

2.2 The core funding of universities is largely provided through the State. The HEA determines the amount of money³ to be allocated to each third level institution out of overall funding provided by the Department.

2.3 In 2009, the third level education sector was allocated €1.6 billion in grants by the HEA. Figure 2.1 provides a breakdown of those grants.

Figure 2.1 Distribution of HEA Grants in 2009

	Recurrent	Capital	Research ^a	Other Elements ^b	Total
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
UCD	178,406	5,127	27,863	2,204	213,600
TCD	130,498	13,151	19,987	1,598	165,234
UCC	128,910	10,950	21,962	1,658	163,480
NUIG	108,711	13,520	11,215	1,249	134,695
UL	87,333	7,497	9,080	1,699	105,609
DCU	55,152	1,664	11,809	1,063	69,688
NUIM	53,408	5,397	9,873	559	69,237
All Universities	742,418	57,306	111,789	10,030	921,543
Institutes of Technology	528,392	- ^c	24,253	6,456	559,101
Other Institutions ^d	75,680	15,856	17,575	4,379	113,490
Other	1,346,490	73,162	153,617	20,865	1,594,134

Source: Higher Education Authority Draft Financial Statements.

Notes:

- a This refers to capital and recurrent funding for research projects.
- b 'Other elements' comprises Erasmus (€4.8 million) and Access grants (€16 million).
- c In addition, €60.77 million in capital funding was assigned by the Department to the institutes of technology in 2009.
- d Funding is allocated to a number of other institutions. The institutions included here, and the amounts granted to each of them, is set out in Schedule I to the HEA Financial Statements.

² The charges are variously described in the financial statements of the institutions as student registration charges, student service charges or student capitation charges. In this section, the term student services charge is used to cover all such charges.

³ As set out in Section 12.2 of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971. This section also states that any payment to an institution that the HEA makes shall be made in such manner and subject to such conditions as the HEA thinks fit.

2.4 Funding is also provided to Irish universities by public bodies, other than the HEA, for the purposes of research. The main sources of public research funds are Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the Health Research Board. Research funding may also be sourced from the EU, business and industry and charitable organisations.

Chapter Focus

The Chapter sets out to

- review the current status of measures to revise the recurrent grant allocation procedures of the HEA
- describe how universities allocate funds internally and schedule resources
- examine the transparency of application and accounting for student services charges.

The Chapter also outlines the arrangements for accountability in respect of universities.

Allocation of Recurrent Funding

2.5 Between 1990 and 2006, a Unit Cost Model informed the allocation of the core recurrent grant. Each university provided information annually that allowed total costs and the costs per student (full-time equivalent) to be produced. The model distinguished between undergraduates, postgraduate teaching and postgraduate research activity, by cost element, by faculty/discipline/subject area and by course. It also provided information on contact hours.

2.6 However, there was considerable delay in producing these costings and a meeting of the Irish Universities Association⁴ (IUA) in October 2007 noted that the last complete set of unit cost returns was in respect of 2002/2003. Because unit cost data had to be reconciled to audited accounts under this system, the information available to inform the grant allocation process was always historical. For example, the unit cost data for 2002/2003 was used to inform the 2005 grant allocation.

2.7 A new model for allocating recurrent funding to the universities was introduced in 2006 – the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM). In 2009, €742 million was provided for the running of universities through the RGAM.

2.8 The RGAM is used to allocate the total amount available for recurrent funding on the following basis

- student numbers are aggregated, with weighting to reflect subject type
- the amount is determined after taking account of weightings relating to the resource intensity of courses
- account is also taken of the level of disadvantage⁵ in the student population – an additional weighting of 33% is used to adjust for this factor
- a standard per capita amount is determined by reference to the available funding.

⁴ The Irish Universities Association is a representative body of the seven universities. The IUA work with and on behalf of the universities to develop strategy and associated actions to advance third and fourth level education and research.

⁵ Including students with a disability, mature students and people who face social, economic or cultural obstacles.

2.9 The HEA has classified academic courses into four broad groups of subjects and applies weightings within these groups as set out in Figure 2.2

Figure 2.2 Weightings Applied to University Subject Groups

Subject Group	Subject Group Weighting
A Clinical Stages of Undergraduate Courses	
Medicine	2.3
Dentistry, Veterinary	4.0
B Laboratory-Based Subjects	
Science, Engineering, Pre-clinical Medicine and Dentistry	1.7
Postgraduate Research (1.6 x 3)	4.8
C Subjects with a Studio, Laboratory or Fieldwork Element	
Undergraduate Courses	1.3
Postgraduate Research (1.3 x 3)	3.9
D All Other Courses	
Undergraduate	1.0
Postgraduate Research (1.0 x 3)	3.0

2.10 The standard per capita amounts are ultimately a factor of the total available resources. The total available funding divided by the total student numbers (after weighting) yields the standard per capita amount. Consequently, the model is not a demand-led funding mechanism – it is a redistributive model with the standard per capita amount that is used for annual allocation purposes depending on the total level of funding available each year.

2.11 In addition to the in-built weighting of research students, as outlined in Figure 2.2, and as a first step in the process, 5% is top-sliced from the aggregate grant for all institutions, exclusive of the grant in lieu of tuition fees, and reallocated as follows

- 75% in line with the proportion of PhD and Masters research degrees awarded
- 25% to reflect the proportion of research income per academic staff member, earned by each institution.

2.12 Once fully implemented the model will allocate two separate but related funding streams

- the core annual recurrent grant
- a performance related element (strategic performance funding).

2.13 The movement to allocating funding based on the weightings in the new model represented a shift from cost based provision to funding proportionate to the educational resource demands of the student population. Figure 2.3 outlines the main differences between the Unit Cost Model and the RGAM.

Figure 2.3 Main differences between the Unit Cost Model and the RGAM

Unit Cost Model	RGAM
Core grant allocation informed by unit cost data	Weighted student numbers in four basic price groups determine allocation
Adjustments for pension not transparent	Specific weighting for different methods of funding pension schemes within model
Part-time student adjustments not transparent	Clear methodology for weighting part-time students
Funding transfers indicated were applied conservatively	Full impact on allocation within three years. Moderating mechanism introduced for financial stability of sector
Unit cost data not benchmarked internationally	Agreed subject price group weightings accord with Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) weightings ^a
No specific recognition of research performance	Research performance explicitly and transparently incentivised through 5% research top-slice of total core
Under-represented groups funded through strategic initiative process. Projects selected by HEA	Funding for under-represented groups in core institutional prioritisation
Limited special circumstances	Special circumstances/special institutions may be taken into account
Funding impacted by student number increases and movement of costs in other universities	Greater predictability of funding - funds follow the students in each institution
Student numbers reconciled to annual statistical return	Audit of student numbers

Source : Higher Education Authority.

Note:

a Analysis has indicated that these are very similar to Irish unit cost ratios.

Moderating Mechanism

2.14 The HEA began to apply the new funding mechanism to universities from 2006. Subject to the moderating mechanism described below, funding differences arising from comparison between the outputs of the existing model and the new model were to be phased in, 10% in 2006, a further 45% in 2007 and the remaining 45% in 2008.

2.15 In 2006, a risk and sensitivity analysis of the RGAM was carried out by an independent consultant on behalf of the HEA and examined what measures might be built into the model in order to ensure the financial stability of the system and to guard against unintended or dysfunctional behaviour arising from its implementation. The report concluded that year-on-year movement in the allocation to individual institutions should be limited to one or two percent above or below the overall increase or decrease in the total recurrent grant allocated to the sector. The application of the moderating mechanism is designed to protect the financial stability of institutions in a situation where student numbers are not capped and decisions in relation to student growth in one institution could adversely impact on another institution's budget.

2.16 The moderating mechanism was introduced with effect from 2007 and, initially, permitted a maximum movement in recurrent grant for individual universities of $\pm 2\%$ over inflation in any one year by comparison with the preceding year, with inflation defined as the overall percentage increase in grant funding available to be allocated through the model. Due to the recent reduction in exchequer recurrent funding, the moderating mechanism was reduced to 1% for 2008 and 2009 grant allocations. For 2010, the moderating mechanism was increased to 1.5%.

2.17 The President of NUIM maintains that the introduction of the moderating mechanism operated to delay the move to an equitable funding mechanism by protecting the over-funding of some universities that became evident following the implementation of the RGAM. He stated that it was ironic that universities where the student cohort is drawn from largely lower socio-economic groups are denied public resources so that universities who draw their students from largely higher socio-economic groups can benefit disproportionately from public resources. He estimated that approximately €7.9 million rightly due to NUIM has been transferred to other universities since 2006. This has a direct impact on the staff/student ratio at NUIM and on this University's ability to maintain its infrastructure. It constrains the rate at which the University can implement its strategic objectives.

Impact of Performance

2.18 It was intended that, in future years, a further element would be factored into allocation – a strategic performance funding component. This would be targeted at improving strategic management in universities. The aim was to ensure that educational activity occurs within a coherent institutional policy and planning framework that links with national objectives for higher education.

2.19 It was envisaged that a maximum of 10% of the core grant would be available for this purpose and that it would be released to institutions only after a decision of the HEA on the basis of recommendations of a panel of expert reviewers, in circumstances where they had concluded that the institution met certain criteria. It was intended that allocations would commence in 2007 with a focus on the quality of strategic plans presented to reviewers and thereafter, the focus was to progressively shift to outcomes.

2.20 In this regard, it was planned that strategies would encompass certain elements set down by the Minister for Education and Skills (the Minister) including, for example, how the institution planned to contribute to the achievement of national priority objectives. This component of the model has yet to be implemented. The HEA stated that this element had been deferred pending the report of the National Strategy Group on Higher Education.

Student Numbers

2.21 Under the revised model, student numbers both within and between institutions are critically important in determining grant allocations. The HEA, in conjunction with the IUA Registrars Group agreed terms of reference for the regular audit of the student numbers. An independent group commenced a two-phased audit in 2007 which examined the price groups to which students were allocated as well as the systems in place in the universities to produce the numbers.

2.22 The audit group drew up a report for each university and where necessary revised student returns were submitted. In the context of the 2009 grant allocation, the audit group reported that *“Overall, the panel found remarkable consistency and adherence to the HEA framework for Price Group assignment as set out in the terms of the RGAM. It is clear that the universities allocate the Price Groups in an objective manner and, given the fact that the submissions being examined represent only the third occasion on which the new RGAM is being applied, the HEA can, in the Panel’s view, regard the implementation of the new approach as successful and place great reliance on the data submitted by the universities.”*

Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects

2.23 In 2008, the HEA introduced a process whereby institutions can apply for funding for subjects that are considered to be strategically important and vulnerable. Some funding was set aside for such subjects outside the price group weightings mechanism.

On-going Refinement of the RGAM

2.24 While the move to introduce a funding mechanism based on the type and resource intensity of courses has been well advanced, on-going refinement will be necessary in a number of areas, for example

- development of access funding mechanisms
- altering the calculation of the top-slice for research
- examining the possibility of introducing credit-based funding
- reviewing the effects of increasing student numbers on the proportion of core grant available.

2.25 Up to 2007, data was not available in relation to the number of Access⁶ students attending individual universities. As a result, baseline funding was allocated through RGAM to support equity of access. In 2007, the HEA in consultation with the institutions, began to collect data on Access students at registration. Data is currently available for two years (2007/2008 and 2008/2009) and data in respect of 2009/2010 is currently being collected. It is intended that funding in future years will be based on the actual number of Access students in individual universities.

2.26 The weightings used in the RGAM are based on the number of full-time equivalent students. However, more students are now combining study and work and attending college on a part-time basis.

2.27 The HEA has stated that it proposes to do some modelling of scenarios including credit-based funding systems to take account of changes in education programme delivery and the introduction of flexible learning options.

2.28 The HEA noted that factors such as increasing student numbers can impact on the balance to be achieved between the revised funding model, grant in lieu of tuition fees and other earmarked funding activities. It stated that it will be examining any potential implications arising from this.

⁶ Access students comprise those students that are under-represented in higher education. The under-represented groups in higher education are those who are socially, economically or culturally under-represented in higher education, mature students and students with a disability.

Conclusion – Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

The Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM), while not fully implemented as originally envisaged by the HEA, has been well advanced. However, funding is allocated after applying a moderating mechanism to the amounts determined by the RGAM. This mechanism was introduced to limit the effect of significant changes in funding to individual universities from one year to the next. The HEA is currently examining the allocation of funding to universities which will take account of overall decreases in funding as well as the impact of increasing student numbers on the amounts allocated as grant in lieu of fees.

In addition, aspects of the model also need to be reviewed and refined, for example

- how access and research funding are allocated and
- exploring alternative methods for the allocation of funds which take account of changes that have occurred in education delivery mechanisms.

Internal Resource Allocation and Scheduling

2.29 Most universities report using a central allocation system to distribute the available funding to units within the university. Trinity College and UCC report top slicing of the allocation with 30% of funds set aside for research by both universities. In the University of Limerick the scheduling of lectures takes account of a one day per week research commitment.

2.30 The sharing of modules across faculties inevitably leads to increased scheduling complexity. While recognising that practices will vary from institution to institution there would be merit in exploring the wider applicability of approaches such as that emanating from the Strategic Innovation Fund project at NUIG so as to optimise the use of teaching facilities. This project involved the development of a database of university estate space which is used to help support the decision-making process in the allocation of academic and academic support unit space.

2.31 Appendix A sets out a description of the internal grant allocation, scheduling and deployment practices of universities.

Accounting for Student Services Charges

2.32 Students enrolling in third level education institutions are liable to pay service charges. The charges are intended to be used by the institutions to defray the costs they incur in the provision of student services. The charges were introduced in 1996 following the assumption by the State of responsibility for most undergraduate fees.

2.33 The Minister sets a maximum services charge level for all third level institutions. From year to year, the amount has generally increased in line with inflation. However, as Figure 2.4 indicates, there was a two-thirds increase in the level of the charges for the 2002/2003 academic year and a further two-thirds increase for the 2009/2010 academic year.

Figure 2.4 Student Services Charge as determined by Minister for Education and Skills, 2001/2002 to 2009/2010

Year	Service charge
2001/2002	€396
2002/2003	€670
2003/2004	€670
2004/2005	€750
2005/2006	€775
2006/2007	€800
2007/2008	€825
2008/2009	€900
2009/2010	€1,500

2.34 The aggregate income of third level institutions from student services charges in 2007/2008 is estimated to have been in the region of €90 million to €95 million. The increases in the rate charged since then are likely to result in the income in 2009/2010 being of the order of €165 million to €175 million, before the impact of increased student numbers.

2.35 The Minister takes account of the potential for the institutions to raise income through the imposition of the services charges in determining the level of recurrent grant funding to allocate for third level institutions. The Minister has indicated that this is based on the understanding that the revenue generated by the increase adopted by each institution would reflect their requirements in defraying the full cost of items that fall to be funded by the charge. This increase would enable individual institutions to bring the amount contributed by students more into line with the real cost of providing non-tuition student services in those institutions. Where income from the charge did not previously meet the full cost of these services, this required an effective cross subsidisation by institutions from their general block grant funding. In the context of the budget decision to agree increases of up to €600, individual institutions were informed by the HEA, at the request of the Minister, that they would need to be able to justify the level of increase by reference to the related cost of services in their own institution.

2.36 The Department reduced the level of the recurrent grants provided to the HEA for allocation to individual institutions in 2002/2003, 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 recognising the potential for the institutions to recover a higher proportion of their costs through the service charge as a result of the increases in these years⁷.

Basis of the Charges

2.37 The legislative frameworks underpinning the operation of the institutes of technology and of the universities provide a statutory basis for the respective governing authorities to charge fees and admission/registration charges for courses, lectures and examinations.

⁷ UCC has pointed out that the additional income did not compensate for the reduction in the recurrent grant.

2.38 In the case of the institutes of technology, tuition fees and admission charges determined by the respective governing authorities are subject to such conditions as may be specified from time to time by the Minister and/or by the HEA⁸.

2.39 In the case of the universities, legislation provides for the HEA to review with the university authorities current or proposed fees and service charges. Following consultation with the Minister, the HEA may advise the universities on the amounts that in its opinion should be charged⁹.

2.40 In practice, the Minister specifies the services charge level for full-time students that may be applied by the institutions. The same student services charge amount has generally been applied by all the institutions.

2.41 Institutions may add a 'top-up' amount to the student services charge but only where there is agreement with the student body that such extra amounts may be introduced. These are generally for specific student capital projects, such as a sports centre.

2.42 Not all students pay the services charge. Full-time postgraduate/diploma students, part-time students and students from outside the EU area pay college fees, but in such cases, the amounts invoiced do not distinguish between tuition fees and the element of the fees required to cover services costs.

Accounting for the Cost of Student Services

2.43 There has been no formal definition by the Department or by the HEA on what services are to be included in setting the services charge.

2.44 The annual financial statements of each of the third level institutions state the expenditure in relation to provision of certain student-related services, for example examination/registration services and of student services provided by the institution. The latter services may be provided directly by the institution or through related undertakings, such as campus companies or through student unions.

2.45 Where services are provided directly by the institution, the expenditure may include the salary costs of staff involved directly in the provision of services. Some institutions charge costs related to premises, but the practice in relation to charging of overheads varies. The sums shown for the cost of the services do not include apportionments of depreciation or of imputed pension liabilities.

2.46 Where services are provided indirectly through campus companies or student unions, the expenditure recorded may be in the form of a block grant, or 'capitation' grant to reflect amounts granted to such entities.

2.47 In general, the cost of services presented in the financial statements are not apportioned between those incurred in respect of students that pay the charges and those that do not.

⁸ Section 18 of the Dublin Institute of Technology Acts, 1992 to 2006; Section 17 of the Institutes of Technology Acts, 1992 to 2006.

⁹ Section 40 of the Universities Act, 1997.

Accounting for Service Charge Income

2.48 The HEA has statutory responsibility for specifying the form of the financial statements to be produced by third level education institutions. In 1998, the HEA issued guidelines in relation to managing the funding raised through student services charges. This proposed that each institution would provide financial information each year explaining how the income derived from the charges had been used¹⁰. Subsequently, the HEA asked the institutions to include notes in their financial statements about the student services charge income. While all the institutions include such notes, the practice in relation to the extent of disclosure and form of presentation varies between sectors and between institutions.

Use of Services Charge Income by the Universities

2.49 The universities include a note in their financial statements in relation to student services charge income. They present the information in an income and expenditure format, with a residual deficit. The accounting policies used in drawing up the note are not explained in the universities' financial statements.

2.50 An examination of the universities' un-audited financial statements for 2007/2008 and other relevant documents indicates the following

- The financial statements do not disclose the amount of the student services charge or the number of students that pay the charge. In some cases, the notes refer to additional special levies, for example a mandatory €75 sports centre usage charge was introduced in Trinity College in 2008/2009, following a referendum held by the students and in NUIM in 2007/2008, a capital levy¹¹ of €68 was collected from students to fund capital expenditure on student buildings.
- The services charge income stated in the financial statements of some universities is shown net of an amount deducted in relation to a 'reduction in State (recurrent) grant'. In other cases, both the gross and net income amounts are shown.
- The net income figure is compared to the universities expenditure on student services which includes charges for premises/facilities. In all cases, the results of the comparison indicates a shortfall in the (net) income relative to the expenditure figure. The extent of the reported shortfall varies considerably.

Comparison with Institutes of Technology

2.51 The financial statements of each institute of technology include a note setting out the gross amount collected through student services charges and how that funding was applied. In each case, the basis for compilation of the note is explained in an accounting policy and the format of presentation of the note is relatively standard¹².

2.52 While the financial position in each institute varies, the following general pattern of collection and use of the income within the institute of technology sector is evident

¹⁰ The framework agreement also set out a model for consultation with student representatives on how the 'student services' part of the charge should be applied, including determination of the amounts to be allocated to student unions, clubs and societies. The need for adequate accountability arrangements in respect of funds provided to students unions, clubs and societies was emphasised.

¹¹ In NUIM, this is considered to be a capital contribution and not part of the student services charge.

¹² A common standard format is being applied for the 2008/2009 financial statements of the institutes. This should enhance the consistency of presentation.

- Each of the institutes indicates that some of the services charge income has been applied for general recurrent expenditure. This is presented as an amount per student ‘directed by the Department to be applied to recurrent expenditure’. In the financial statements for 2007/2008, most of the institutes report that €330 per full-time student was applied by each institution in this way.
- Each of the institutes states the amount of services charge income used to meet examination/registration/general education costs, including the salary costs of staff working in registration and examination administration.
- Each of the institutes also states the amount used to pay for student services, etc. This may be in the form of amounts spent on directly provided services, capitation grants paid to student services committees or subsidiaries set up specifically to provide student services.

2.53 Many of the institutes indicate that part of the services charge income was transferred to restricted reserves to provide for planned or expected future costs of delivery of student services, such as the capital costs of construction of planned sporting or entertainment facilities. This generally occurs where the student services charge income exceeds the allocations made for the other purposes outlined above.

Review of Student Services Charges

2.54 The HEA is conducting a review to identify

- the income and expenditure associated with the student services charge
- the internal allocation processes for same and
- the additional charges that are levied on students outside of the student services charge.

Conclusion – Student Charges

Because of the way expenditure on student services is calculated and presented in the financial statements of universities

- the full economic cost of the services to which the service charges are linked cannot readily be identified from the financial statements of third level institutions in their current format
- care must be taken in using the information in the financial statements to make comparisons between third level institutions on the cost of the services provided to students.

Accountability and Audit

2.55 Under the Universities Act, 1997 the HEA approves the form of financial statements and records to be kept by universities. Currently, the financial statements produced by the universities comprise

- consolidated accounts of the university, presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) in Ireland
- a funding statement which records how money provided for core university activities is expended, not presented on a GAAP basis
- a reconciliation statement which identifies the differences between the two.

2.56 Section 39 (2) of the 1997 Act provides that the accounts, to the extent directed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, be submitted annually for audit. In order to avoid confusion in presenting two sets of financial statements prepared under differing accounting bases, I have decided to attach an audit report to the annual consolidated financial statements of universities only.

Delays in Finalising Financial Statements and Audits

2.57 All accounts for years ending on 30 September 2005 have been audited. There was some delay in finalising those accounts while issues relating to consolidation were being worked out.

2.58 Since 2006, delays have occurred in the adoption of consolidated financial statements of the universities by their governing authorities and consequently in completing the audits for those years. The main cause of the delay relates to accounting for pensions in compliance with the financial reporting standard on accounting for retirement benefits (FRS 17). FRS 17 sets out the accounting treatment for retirement benefits such as pensions and medical care during retirement. The requirements of FRS 17 are effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2005.

2.59 Five¹³ of the seven universities operated funded pension schemes. Those pension schemes closed to new members in 2005 with staff recruited thereafter joining schemes where benefits will be funded on a pay-as-you-go basis out of current revenues.

2.60 Legislation was enacted in 2009¹⁴ which provides for the funds of closed university pension schemes to be transferred to the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF). When the transfers are effected, the pension liabilities of the schemes will fall to be met from current revenues with any deficit being made good by funds provided by the Oireachtas.

2.61 In the meantime, most governing authorities delayed adoption of the financial statements until the transfer arrangements have been effected.

Corporate Governance

2.62 In 2007, the HEA in consultation with the IUA published a code on the governance of the Irish universities¹⁵. Detailed guidelines attached to the code suggest broad terms of reference for audit committees. These included

- advice to the governing authority on the appointment of auditors¹⁶
- discussion with internally appointed auditors on the nature and scope of their audit
- discussion on problems arising on audit
- review of the auditor's management letter and management's response
- monitoring the performance and quality of the internally appointed auditor's work and the auditors independence from the university.

¹³ Trinity College, UCD, UCC, NUIG and NUIM.

¹⁴ Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009.

¹⁵ Governance of Irish Universities – A Governance Code of Legislation, Principles, Best Practice and Guidelines.

¹⁶ The auditors envisaged are internally appointed. Under Section 39 of the Universities Act, 1997 the Comptroller and Auditor General is the statutorily designated external auditor of each university.

Audit Arrangements

2.63 A practice had existed in the case of former National University of Ireland colleges of appointing a firm of accountants to conduct an audit of the college's financial statements. This practice was adopted by new universities (University of Limerick and DCU) and has also been continued by Trinity College and NUIM.

2.64 Given the practice of university governing authorities appointing auditors to undertake full scale audits in accordance with International Auditing Standards, and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and expense, I have, in undertaking my audit sought to rely on the work of the internally appointed auditors taking account of audit work and conclusions reached and undertaking any additional work considered necessary, usually designed to test obligations which attach to bodies in receipt of substantial funding from the State. In recent years, testing by my officers has concentrated, in particular, on staff remuneration, pensions and procurement.

2.65 The audit of university subsidiary companies is carried out exclusively by internally appointed firms of auditors.

Conclusion – Accountability and Audit

In the past year discussions have taken place with the HEA and the universities with a view to formalising the relationship between the internally appointed auditors and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

I have proposed that, to the extent that it is appropriate to do so, I will continue to rely on the audit work of the internally appointed auditors commissioned by the universities.

However, while acknowledging the ongoing cooperation of both universities and their internally appointed auditors, I consider that, in order to ensure that the legislation relating to audit is fully complied with, and without prejudice to my right to carry out a full external audit, certain adjustments are necessary to the current arrangements.

In particular, more formal arrangements between the university, my Office and internally appointed auditors are necessary in order to ensure that there are clear provisions on audit planning and access by my Office to their working papers, reports and management letters. It is my view that this would best be achieved by inclusion of appropriate terms in the contracts between universities and their internally appointed auditors.

General Views of the Irish Universities Association

2.66 The IUA pointed out that while universities are making strong efforts to diversify their funding, with particular reference to externally funded research activity, philanthropy, international education etc., it remains the case that the Irish higher education system is exceptionally dependent on the Exchequer.

2.67 In relation to the student charge the IUA noted that the statutory position is that a university has the power to charge fees in respect of any aspect of its operations and to determine the level of those fees. The HEA has the power to review certain aspects of the fees to be charged and, following consultation with the Minister, advise on the fees which in its opinion should be charged.

2.68 While this is the statutory position, it stated that the reality is that with the Estimates allocations having been determined by government, the student services charge has been derived as the residual amount required to maintain some level of balance in the overall funding of the institutions from year to year.

2.69 As a result, the IUA is of the opinion that if the overall funding system currently in place is to be continued, it would be more transparent to recognise that the student services charge has become a generalised fee/student contribution to support the overall student experience.

2.70 In relation to overall funding to universities the IUA noted that universities have experienced a continuing upward trend in student numbers. Under the RGAM, the unit of resource per student has declined and an indefinite continuation of the trend is not sustainable.

2.71 The IUA noted that improvements have been achieved in the replacement of the Unit Cost Model by RGAM. However, it stated that the need for a moderating mechanism to limit the effect of changes under RGAM indicates the limitations of a purely distributional approach. In addition, as a result of growing student numbers, the grant in lieu of fees component grew significantly. In 2010, while total core funding reduced by 9%, the RGAM element declined by the order of 27%.

2.72 The universities' view is that the entire funding system needs to be reappraised. Key elements of that reappraisal would include

- consideration of a new approach based on increased student contributions through the medium of a system of income-contingent deferred loans and top-up fees
- re-evaluation of the approach to the student services charge
- consideration of whether the current model for allocation of funding should be replaced by a system where institutions could contract with the State to deliver specified outputs and be funded on the basis of those outputs. It acknowledged that this would require more demanding planning in regard to overall student numbers and the educational mix, as well as more sophisticated cost data.

General Views of the Accounting Officer

2.73 The Accounting Officer stated that the Higher Education Strategy Group is considering the need to address the future funding pressures on the system that will result if projections of significant future growth in demand are to be accommodated. The use of current resources in the sector is an important element of its terms of reference. Other challenges for the system will be to significantly diversify provision to accommodate growth through part-time and flexible learning options. This will impact on further refinement and change of the grant allocation model. These changes will need to align funding with performance outcomes as a mechanism for supporting overall delivery on broader national policy goals.

2.74 In relation to issues concerning the student services charge, a review currently being undertaken by the HEA is expected to identify the services comprehended by the charge together with the income and expenditure associated with such services. However, she considered that an apportionment of the costs of services incurred in respect of students who pay the charge and those who do not would only be possible on the basis of a notional breakdown. It would be expected that the outcome of the review will also provide for accounting policies underpinning the university/institutes of technology financial statements to be applied in a consistent manner across the sector and between institutions. The outcome of the review should also enable an examination and updating of the HEA's Framework of Good Practice for the Provision of Student Services.

Conclusions

The total funding provided for universities by the HEA in 2009 amounted to €921 million.

The HEA has been moving from the allocation of the core recurrent grant on a unit costing model to one where allocations are informed by the type and resource intensity of courses. The model known as the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model is designed as a redistributive mechanism. Allocation of funding under the revised system was to be fully implemented by 2008 but the full redistributive effect has not yet taken place due to a process of moderating the impact that was subsequently adopted. In addition, some elements of this model have yet to be actioned including setting aside an element targeted at the improvement of strategic management in universities and continuous refinement is likely for sometime. In 2009, €742 million was provided in recurrent grant funding for the running of universities.

Broadly speaking internal allocations at university level mirror those employed by the HEA. In linking staff, students and accommodation a variety of scheduling approaches are employed and some universities report high occupancy rates for teaching facilities (90% in UCD and 80% in UCC). There could be scope for the sharing of good practice designed to optimise university space consistent with lecturer availability and the demand for modules which can be shared across faculties.

The extent of information disclosed in university financial statements about service charges is limited.

The HEA should consider issuing fresh instructions to the universities about the extent of the information to be provided, and about how it should be presented. Ways in which the quality of the information could be improved include

- adoption by the universities of a common accounting policy in relation to student services charges, including standard definitions
- a common presentation format
- disclosure of the number of full-time and part-time students, distinguishing between those that pay service charges and those that do not
- disclosure of the student services charges levied on each category of student, including any additional mandatory charges
- statement of the total income from student service charges.

As currently presented, the information contained in the financial statements of third level institutions is not sufficient to allow the full economic cost of student services to be identified.

In the absence of a full economic cost analysis, it will not be possible to determine the extent to which the income raised through student services charges covers the cost of services provided to students.

The Irish Universities Association has stated that the basis of funding of universities needs to be reappraised in the light of the increasing student numbers and that a new approach to student contributions is needed.

All accounts for years ending on 30 September 2005 have been audited and reported upon by me. There was some delay in finalising those accounts while issues relating to consolidation were being considered.

A practice had existed in the case of former National University of Ireland colleges of appointing a firm of accountants to conduct an audit of the college's financial statements.

Given the practice of university governing authorities appointing auditors to undertake full scale audits in accordance with International Auditing Standards, and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and expense, I have, in undertaking my audit sought to rely on the work of the internally appointed auditors taking account of audit work and conclusions reached and undertaking any additional work considered necessary, usually designed to test obligations which attach to bodies in receipt of substantial funding from the State. In recent years, testing by my officers has concentrated on staff remuneration, pensions and procurement.

However, while acknowledging the ongoing cooperation of both universities and their internally appointed auditors, I consider that, in order to simultaneously ensure that the legislation relating to audit is fully complied with and the most efficient process is employed, and without prejudice to my right to carry out a full external audit, certain adjustments are necessary to the current arrangements and, in particular, the creation of formal arrangements between the university, my Office and internally appointed auditors to ensure that there are clear provisions on audit planning and access by my Office to working papers, reports and management letters of internally appointed auditors. It is my view that this would best be achieved by inclusion of appropriate terms in the contracts between universities and their internally appointed auditors.

Chapter 3

Costing and Quality Assurance

Costing and Quality Assurance

3.1 In order to deliver on their mandates effectively and efficiently, universities need information on the cost of their activities and the quality of their outputs.

Chapter Focus

This Chapter examines the steps being taken or proposed to improve the costing of university activities, the changes being made in the organisation of and approaches to teaching and the arrangements which universities have implemented under the Universities Act, 1997 to review the quality of their outputs.

Costing of Services

3.2 As well as replacing the Unit Cost Model with RGAM for allocation purposes, there has been a move to provide more refined costing for university activity. The changing nature of teaching at third level has meant that academics are increasingly involved in research and in other activities. The Unit Cost Model was regarded as deficient since under that model, teaching hours drove most costs while, in practice, contact hours account for approximately one-third of the total time of an academic. Alternative modes of delivery including e-learning, distance learning and placement supervision were not well-suited to that type of allocation method.

3.3 As a result, work began on developing a full economic cost model, the purpose of which is to provide a holistic costing system that would cover all activities of a university. It was envisaged that when it was fully developed for 2007/2008 data, universities would no longer be required to support the unit cost model.

3.4 The key outputs planned from the new costing model are

- an annual report, reconciled to the financial statements for each university, showing total costs (direct and indirect) for teaching, research and other activities
- costs per student per subject area
- costs per school/department and
- indirect costs of research (reported only to sponsors who pay a cost-based price).

3.5 The HEA provided grants of over €2 million to the Irish Universities Association under the Strategic Innovation Fund to complete a two-phase process to develop the model.

3.6 The objective of the first phase was to scope a full economic costing model and to assess the feasibility of applying that model across the sector. Its development would involve the identification of appropriate cost pools, cost drivers and allocation methods for indirect costs and overheads. It would identify the data requirements of the system and the sources of data. The design of the model which included an outline of the standard outputs and underlying principles of the system was agreed in January 2008. An implementation plan was finalised in April 2008.

3.7 The second phase of the project was aimed at implementing the model in all seven universities. It was envisaged that the system would be piloted in respect of the 2008/2009 academic and financial year with the first full economic cost data being publicly available in mid-2011 based on the 2009/2010 academic year.

Data Capture

The full economic cost model allocates total university costs between teaching, research and other activities. Pay costs for academic staff is a major component of total costs. These costs are allocated on the basis of an Academic Activity Profile (AAP). The AAP form, to be completed three times a year by all academics, does not capture the actual hours worked in any period but requires the staff member to allocate a percentage of their time across nine nationally agreed activities as set out below.

Academic Activity Profile

Activity	Category	% Time
Teaching	Undergraduate	
	Postgraduate	
	Postgraduate research	
Research	Sponsored with output	
	No external sponsor with output	
	Other research and scholarly activity	
Other	Other income generating activities	
	Clinical services	
	Administration and management	

3.8 A progress report on the second phase of the project in December 2009 indicated that progress had been made in a number of areas but some problems had arisen with its implementation. Progress included the following

- a national plan had been developed and communicated
- a project manager had been appointed
- a national steering group was formed and had met on a number of occasions
- technical consultants had been appointed
- the required software had been acquired.

3.9 At individual university level, steering groups had been established, the design projects were completed and a manager had been assigned in each university. While most institutions have generated preliminary pilot results from their models the data may not be completely robust due to assumptions and estimates used for the purposes of the pilot. It is now anticipated that more robust results would not be available for external publication in mid 2011 as originally planned.

3.10 A number of reviews of the system have been undertaken including

- a conceptual review of the model to consider the project objectives and to advise in relation to whether the model is 'fit for purpose' and in line with best practice
- an operational review in order to maximise the operability of the model
- technical validation of the university versions of the models by consultants employed to provide quality assurance and to ensure their consistency with the model template.

3.11 The IUA informed me that the conceptual review had concluded that the model was broadly fit for purpose but made a number of recommendations for improvement, the most significant of which was the adoption of a time driven approach to academic time. One university, NUIM, stated that it has already begun to implement this recommendation. The aggregated data will provide an estimate of the total number of hours worked by each academic, on average, over a 45-week year. This data is expected to be available in the first half of 2010 and will be used in the first instance to test the validity of the basis of the cost allocation and will, when fully implemented, support the implementation of workload modelling in all departments in NUIM.

Conclusions – Revised Costing Model

There has been considerable delay in generating and reporting up-to-date costing information across the university sector.

The latest comprehensive data relates to 2002/2003^a. A replacement to the unit cost model is still under development. A fundamental building block within the model is staff time. While academic staff time accounts for approximately 35% of university costs, the IUA estimates that 70% of costs are currently allocated on the basis of academic time.

In early 2009 the staff representative bodies recommended that their members should not engage or cooperate with the data collection. This made data collection for the academic year 2008/2009 difficult. However, in cases where cooperation was withheld, data was collected by a variety of methods including some estimation by heads of departments/schools. For this reason, the results are unlikely to be sufficiently robust.

The inclusion of actual hours worked on the form would facilitate the evaluation of the contribution of individual academics by examining their actual hours worked broken down between teaching, research and other.

Note:

- a Some universities have completed unit cost analysis for later years and submitted returns to the HEA. Two universities have completed returns for 2006/2007.

Organisation of Education Services

3.12 In the organisation of educational services, universities have, in recent years, made alterations designed to provide greater flexibility and choice to students. The initiatives undertaken include

- adopting the European Credit Transfer System¹⁷ (ECTS) to allow for credit accumulation and ease of transfer of students between universities in Ireland and beyond
- supporting this with modularisation and semesterisation¹⁸
- providing in certain instances for more elective modules associated with core course content.

3.13 The observations of the universities were sought on the impact of these changes on the efficient delivery of services and student experience.

3.14 Universities noted that the advent of modular and semesterised programmes has provided greater flexibility in extending the number of course offerings to students and ensuring that programmes can be rapidly adapted to suit the emerging and developing needs of students, employers and wider society.

3.15 Universities also noted that modularisation carries significant administrative and academic overhead in order to manage the curriculum and provide individualised advice and guidance to students. On the other hand, it brings very significant benefits in student learning and facilitates increased efficiency. Module sharing across degree programmes (for different student groups) facilitates economies of scale and the co-scheduling of such modules optimises teaching capacity.

3.16 At a more general level universities pointed out that alterations in teaching methods, and in particular the adoption of new technologies are designed primarily to enhance the student experience by enriching the learning environment rather than to achieve further efficiencies. A portfolio of modules allows a greater number of potential pathways through programmes at little or no additional cost.

3.17 The embedding of many new technologies has enabled new programmes in distance and 'blended' learning modes¹⁹. This has extended access to courses by students who are either geographically dispersed or unable to attend in full-time, on-campus mode. These help provide greater return on the investment in infrastructure and staff training.

3.18 A number of initiatives to increase access and retention had been undertaken. These included initiatives to increase access through the use of more flexible entry routes, more flexible modes of study including part-time and block release versions of existing full-time programmes. NUIM and NUIG have introduced a system of special supports by staff and tutors to students who have difficulty with maths and academic writing.

¹⁷ ECTS is a European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System which is used across Europe for credit transfer (student mobility) and credit accumulation (learning paths towards a degree). Credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components (such as modules, course units, dissertation work, work placements and laboratory work).

¹⁸ Modularisation/semesterisation involves moving from a stage-based structure (normally an academic year) to one based on modules and semesters. A module is a self-contained unit of learning with defined learning outcomes, workload and credits as defined by the ECTS. A semester is a period over which a module is delivered with most universities having two semesters per academic year.

¹⁹ Blended learning and distance learning describe learning activities that involve a systematic combination of face-to-face interactions and technologically mediated interactions between students, teachers and learning resources.

3.19 While most universities stated that precise estimation of the extent of efficiency gains was difficult they pointed to increased student numbers (undergraduate and postgraduate) coupled with reductions in the total number of academic staff which had not adversely affected the retention and completion rates.

Alterations in Teaching Approaches

3.20 As well as changes around the organisation of educational delivery, universities have introduced a variety of initiatives designed to improve their teaching and learning effectiveness.

Educational Technologies

3.21 Almost all of the universities reported increased use of new technologies to provide improved flexibility and increase effectiveness. They each emphasise different approaches including

- A move toward a virtual learning environment including the use of online supports for students. Instances include the provision of an institutional Course Management System/Virtual Learning Environment (Blackboard) which provides web-based resources, communication and assessment tools for all modules and courses on which all students are enrolled.
- Investment in new technologies such as videoconferencing, video-streaming, pod-casting, online deliberation tools, 'electronic voting systems' (for improved in-class discussion and participation), interactive multimedia and virtual worlds.
- UCC also report increasing use of lecture recording for flexible delivery of courses.

3.22 Because there is some risk that new technologies and innovation could act to the detriment of face-to-face contact unless deployed in a complementary fashion, I sought the views of the universities on how this balance is achieved in each institution.

3.23 Universities reported that increasing student numbers and a corresponding diminishing staff-student ratio meant that recourse to technology was vital in maintaining existing levels of service level provision. However, they were also of the opinion that new technologies augment rather than replace face-to-face contact.

Balancing Face-to-Face Contact and New Approaches

3.24 In this respect they pointed out that the design and delivery of courses have to strike an appropriate balance between face-to-face contact, assessment and new methods of course delivery. This is influenced by the cohort of students and their capacity to undertake independent learning as well as the nature of the area of study. Some disciplines such as laboratory-based and language courses typically required smaller classes with more staff-student interaction. In the case of others, knowledge can be imparted in a number of ways to large classes but this typically has to be supported by tutorials or on-line virtual supports for small groups that also involve the lecturers.

3.25 The balance between face-to-face contact and new delivery mechanisms was, in the main, struck at the level of the department responsible for the various disciplines, subject to overall guidance provided by policies and procedures adopted by academic councils. Feedback from external examiners, students and quality review groups were also taken into account. The provision of formative feedback at every stage of the learning process was considered essential in overcoming the key barriers to understanding faced by novices in any high level domain. This required adequate staffing levels and a supporting environment.

Alterations in Teaching Methods

3.26 Most universities reported changes to the teaching methods utilised. These included increased use of

- enquiry and problem-based learning
- blended learning
- peer assisted learning whereby students help and support other students in their academic work
- group work
- smaller classes with more interactive teaching methods
- teaching methods that encourage the integration of research teaching and learning from a student's first term
- links with community and voluntary groups which facilitate the carrying out of scientific research by students for such groups.

Learning Modules

3.27 In terms of course design universities noted the embedding of semesterisation and modularisation as a positive development. The reorganisation of programmes from a unitised system to a modularised has a number of advantages

- there is greater flexibility in the way full and part-time learners access higher education
- universities can alter the programme more easily in response to changing demands
- universities now aim to provide wider module choices with students having the option of taking subjects outside their core area
- workload is spread more evenly throughout the year
- there are opportunities for students who at the end of a semester are required to carry or repeat failed modules to do so in the next semester as opposed to a requirement under the unitised system to pass all exams in order to proceed to the next academic year
- there is increased flexibility for students to transfer their studies to other institutions either within Ireland or in other jurisdictions.

Learning Outcomes and Portability

3.28 Another feature noted by universities is an increased focus on learning outcomes, as set out in the Bologna recommendations²⁰, in particular, in undergraduate modules. In the Bologna declaration ministers affirmed their intention to adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees comprising two main cycles – undergraduate and graduate together with a system of credits such as ECTS. They also sought to promote mobility, European co-operation in quality assurance and a European dimension in higher education.

²⁰ The Bologna recommendations emanated from a meeting in June 1999 of 29 European ministers in charge of higher education to lay the basis for the establishment of a European Higher Education Area by 2010 and the promotion of a European system for higher education world wide. Their commitment became known as the Bologna declaration.

Assessment

3.29 Many universities reported changes to assessment methods with the traditional end of year terminal examination model being replaced by a combination of small assignments throughout the semester and group projects aimed at inculcating a wide range of skills and terminal assessment and essays which may vary from the traditional examination formats to long essays. The overall aim was to create better alignment of assessment, teaching and learning outcomes.

3.30 A focus on learning outcomes was seen as important in assisting teachers of all disciplines to decide what they should teach and what they should assess and therefore develop an appropriate teaching strategy.

Improving Teaching

3.31 Many universities reported the provision of new professional training programmes in teaching and learning as well as other aspects of academic practice. This included, for example

- specific training modules for all staff involved in postgraduate research supervision in UCC
- an online training course aimed at part-time lecturers, tutors and demonstrators is currently being developed by NUIM in conjunction with experts from universities in the United Kingdom and the United States
- the University of Limerick has developed a Specialist Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship targeted at newly appointed academics and PhD students who wish to engage in an academic career
- NUIG stated that under the new PhD fellowship schemes, there is greater participation of postgraduate students in supporting teaching and learning at undergraduate level.

Conclusion – Teaching Organisation and Approaches

A wide array of new approaches to the organisation and delivery of education by universities has been adopted in recent years. Appendix C set out the views of the universities on the changes being made in teaching approaches, the effect of those changes on staff-student interaction and the initiatives to improve efficiency.

There would be merit in evaluating the various initiatives in the area of teaching and learning in order to determine their potential contribution to improving learning outcomes, achieving cost effective delivery and extending access and retention.

Quality Assurance

3.32 Section 35 of the Universities Act, 1997 provides for quality assurance in the universities. In particular, it provides for

- the establishment of quality assurance procedures
- the evaluation at regular intervals²¹ of each department and where appropriate, faculty of the university by employees of the university in the first instance and by persons other than employees who are competent to make national and international comparisons on the quality of teaching and research and the provision of other services
- assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university and publication of results thereon in such form and manner as the governing authority sees fit
- implementation by the governing authority of recommendations of evaluations conducted
- a review from time to time, and in any case at least every 15 years, of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures and the implementation of the findings arising out of those procedures – the governing authority should publish the results of these reviews.

3.33 The HEA also has a statutory role under Section 49 of the Universities Act, 1997 to review the quality assurance procedures in universities.

3.34 Two main types of reviews are conducted in universities

- internal reviews organised by the universities – these are reviews of the academic and administrative departments organised by the individual university (with the assistance of external reviewers)
- institutional reviews of quality assurance – the governing authorities of the seven Irish universities have delegated to the Irish Universities Quality Board²² (IUQB) the role of determining the protocols for the conduct of the external reviews as required by the Universities Act, 1997.

3.35 The HEA and the IUQB jointly commissioned the European Universities Association (EUA) to undertake the first cycle of institutional quality reviews during the period 2004-05. The outcomes were published in 2005 as the Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities.

3.36 The review consisted of

- an initial engagement process between the IUQB and the university to discuss quality matters
- a self assessment report produced by the university
- a review visit followed by the preparation of the reports
- publication of reports
- publication of follow-up measures for each university.

²¹ Evaluation not less than once in every ten years or such longer period as may be determined by the university in agreement with the HEA.

²² The Irish Universities Quality Board was established in 2002 as an independent body, whose Board comprises nominees of the HEA, of employer and trade union bodies and of national and international educational bodies, together with one-third nominated by the universities. It is funded by subscriptions from the seven Irish universities and an annual grant from the HEA.

3.37 This report focuses on the outcome of the institutional reviews. The main themes identified in the 2004/2005 round of reviews are outlined below.

Mission and Strategy of Universities

3.38 Recommendations in relation to the development of the mission and strategy of universities and in some cases the need to adjust or refocus organisational priorities included

- the need to seek out and develop more strategic alliances with other Irish institutions and networks
- clarification and prioritisation of objectives in two of the universities
- adopting a broader focus in terms of student population in three of the universities including more focus on postgraduate, adult, international and mature students.

3.39 The reviews also recommended that universities pursue a strategy of internationalisation and use it as a lever for change. This included

- broadening the concept of internationalisation from one of just recruiting overseas students to developing international and European understandings and opportunities
- monitoring student and other mobility not only in terms of incoming persons but also students and staff going abroad for periods of work and study
- increasing awareness of staff and students of future professional prospects in a European or international arena through improving foreign language skills, increased awareness and involvement of staff in international academic networks and encouragement and recognition for students who undertake study periods abroad.

Teaching and Learning

3.40 In relation to course design and delivery the reviews made recommendations to five of the seven universities. These included the implementation of full modularisation and ECTS, which were expected to realise benefits in terms of efficiency for the university and flexibility for students. It was felt that the sharing of modules across departments should result in economies of scale for academic time, recognition for students of credits obtained irrespective of the institution where these were obtained thus encouraging exchanges with other Irish institutions and foreign universities.

3.41 In three of the universities, the reviews recommended an increased focus on the outcomes of the learning process as opposed to one on teaching inputs.

3.42 In relation to the development of teaching methods, the review recommended that UCD increase the capacity of the Centre For Teaching and Learning to enable it to identify and build on best practice. It also advised that UCD should use experience from a number of academic units to undertake comprehensive reviews of the curriculum and introduce new teaching and learning approaches to foster those activities on a wider basis across the university.

Research

3.43 Themes from the reviews of the research activities of universities included

- the need to develop an explicit research strategy and articulate the related policies more clearly and develop a coherent research management system (two universities)

- the need to increase student numbers in the research area by building up more postgraduate research based programmes and developing PhD and postdoctorate activity (three universities)
- the need for better coordination of the research activity, both within and outside the university, including opportunities to join collective and transversal structures and teams across the university and the development of links with industrial and other partners outside the university (three universities).

3.44 In relation to ensuring quality research, the reviews recommended that UCD link the monitoring and evaluation initiatives for the new research institutes to the university-wide Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process. It also recommended that UCC develop an interdisciplinary approach in order to strengthen research competences and to attract students to interesting new areas of study.

3.45 In DCU, it was recommended that INVENT²³ should systematically inform the quality review process of relevant schools in the areas of research commercialisation, Intellectual Property Rights, and related matters.

Governance

3.46 Almost all of the reviews referred to the need for increased institutional capacity to support central university management with strategic data and analysis as well as provide a greater range of easily accessible information to units across the university and to external partners. This information was considered vital for planning and monitoring.

3.47 In regard to the structure of the governing organs

- two of the reviews recommended the exploration of options to adapt both the size and composition of the governing authority, in order to provide the university with more appropriate strategic direction and oversight
- three of the reviews referred to the need to consider the size, role and structure of the Academic Council in order to provide effective and timely academic governance and counterbalance to the executive management team
- entrusting greater responsibility to the Deans for a variety of academic and management issues including Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement across each faculty was also recommended in three of the reviews.

3.48 In NUIG and NUIM, recommendations were made in relation to alteration of structure. In NUIG it recommended that the review of the internal organisational structure should continue melding smaller units into larger ones. In NUIM it was recognised that the university would need to develop an intermediate level of professional administrative staff, which could support and implement many of the matters that require attention.

²³ INVENT is an Innovation and Enterprise Centre based at DCU. Established in 2001, its mission is to transform knowledge into commercial success and to provide the critical link between the university and the marketplace.

Resource Allocation

3.49 In relation to the systems in use by universities to allocate resources, the reviews recommended

- The use of both input and output measures in developing an internal resource allocation model.
- Increased flexibility in resource allocation to provide positive stimuli for change.
- Alteration in the systems for allocation of resources because of increased diversification of activities. Such models would need to take account of sharing of modules between departments, increased internationalisation and increases in postgraduate numbers and research activity.
- A need for more transparency for faculties and departments in relation to the institutional resource allocation model, its rationale and its priorities.
- The use of the results of the quality review process as a strategic tool for the development of priorities and the allocation of resources.

Quality Improvement

3.50 In terms of teaching, the reviews observed that the evaluation of teaching and programmes was not mandatory. It recommended that systematic evaluation of all courses be implemented with deans and department heads being responsible for the follow-up actions recommended in the evaluations. It also recommended the implementation of a common approach in each institution for the student evaluation of courses.

3.51 In terms of ensuring follow-up on the actions previously recommended, the reviews found that in many cases recommendations at the Department level had been executed while those at the faculty and university levels had not.

3.52 It urged that there should be a quick and visible response from the university leadership following an external review.

Coordination

3.53 The reviews recommended better coordination between the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process and other processes/units in the university. These included

- more explicit links between the quality review outcomes, strategic planning, restructuring and the various human resource and investment initiatives
- feeding the results into the wider institutional decision making process
- exploring options for synergies between professional accreditation and quality review procedures
- greater links with the student body
- using the results of reviews in other quality assurance systems in the universities and ensuring that academic and support staff are aware of these in their daily work.

Conclusion – Institutional Quality Reviews

Appendix C outlines general observations provided by the Irish Universities Association and the detailed responses of the universities to the first round of institutional quality reviews.

The reviews have provided an agenda for organisational development and by and large universities have reported taking actions to address their recommendations.

International Comparison

3.54 Ireland was ranked well over a number of measures presented in a recent report examining the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending on tertiary education²⁴ conducted by the European Commission. It found that Ireland, Japan, Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands were always at or close to what it termed the production possibility frontier which measures the degree to which output is maximised in terms of resources used. In Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands this was mainly due to good performance in scientific production whereas Ireland attained its position due to the graduation rate.²⁵

3.55 Two quality indicators were calculated for this study, the peer review and recruiter view country indicators. These measures aimed to rank countries in terms of how they were viewed by their peers and by those seeking to employ graduates.

- In the peer review, considering their size, Finland, Ireland and Sweden were the countries with most universities pointed out by their peers as being excellent.
- Ireland was ranked first out of the 28 countries for which the recruiter review measure was calculated. Recruiters regard the universities in Ireland and in the UK as providing highly employable graduates.

3.56 The report noted²⁶ that different aspects of education are emphasised in each country with some countries specialising in teaching and others in research. Ireland, France and some East European countries were found to be efficient in the area of teaching. Ireland ranked second of the countries examined in terms of graduates per academic staff member. On average, the number of graduates per staff member was between three and four while Ireland's ratio was just under six.

Recent Developments

3.57 In the 2009 Budget, the Minister announced his intention to amalgamate FETAC, HETAC and the NQAI and to give the amalgamated body responsibility for the external quality assurance of universities, a role currently undertaken by the HEA and the IUQB. The required legislation to bring about the amalgamation is being drafted and the amalgamation is expected to take place in early 2011.

²⁴ Economic Paper 390, European Commission, November 2009.

²⁵ Defined as the percentage of graduates over the number of students in each period.

²⁶ Results presented related to 2005.

Conclusions

International comparisons such as those reported by the European Commission in 2009 suggest that Ireland's universities are efficient in their teaching role and highly regarded by peers and recruiters of graduates.

Nonetheless, their continuous improvement should be both informed and evidenced by reliable information and feedback in terms of relevant indicators. In that respect, in order to demonstrate the delivery of a cost-effective educational product, universities need to be in a position to cost their activities, demonstrate their use of modern delivery methods and have institutional governance and structures aligned with current needs.

There has been considerable delay in generating cost data relating to universities. However, universities are moving to improve their capacity to cost their operations. Because the modes of educational delivery have altered considerably with contact time accounting for a smaller proportion of total academic time there is a need to refine costing approaches across the sector.

The introduction of the full economic costing model could facilitate more informed management decision making by providing more accurate and relevant information. It could identify opportunities for enhanced efficiency through cost comparisons between universities and between different areas of activity. One major obstacle to be overcome derives from the fact that the compilation of accurate cost data is dependent on the completion of Academic Activity Profile Forms by academic staff. Completion of the form is not mandatory and, at present, not all academic staff complete the form. In the absence of this data any emerging costs data is not reliable. Getting full value for investment in this new model depends on its universal deployment.

Teaching approaches have evolved in all universities. Key developments include a move towards research-led teaching, use of educational technology including virtual learning environments, wider module choices, adoption of the ECTS, distance and blended learning programmes and alternative forms of assessment. In general, universities see increased use of technology as augmenting face-to-face contact enabling interaction beyond normal contact time.

In relation to the different approaches to teaching and learning, there is considerable scope for comparative reviews and the sharing of best practice.

Modularisation was pointed to by most universities as a key contributor to efficient delivery allowing for extension of course offerings and adaptation to student needs. Information and Communication Technologies has also enabled a more flexible service. Examples of efficiency improvements were provided by some universities. These included reductions in staff-student ratios over time and relatively higher student levels than comparable UK universities.

Universities were subject to institutional quality reviews over the period 2004-2005. Key recommendations included

- pursuing a policy of internationalisation by developing international and European understandings and opportunities and monitoring outward student and staff mobility
- implementation of full modularisation and the ECTS
- the need to increase postgraduate research and forge research linkages between facilities and with external partners
- equipping central management with strategic data and sharing information across the university and its wider networks
- altering allocation methods to reflect changed processes and new activities
- systematic evaluation of all courses
- a more joined up approach to quality review, strategy formulation and restructuring.

Chapter 4

Remuneration Matters

Remuneration Matters

4.1 Universities have authority to determine the number and grading of their staff. However, the remuneration of each grade is determined with the approval of the Minister²⁷. The process for establishing the salary scales that are approved by the Ministers involves recommendations by the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector (the Review Body) and the implementation of benchmarking and national wage agreements. These are outlined at Annex A to this chapter.

4.2 In addition, arrangements have been made for universities to resort to a special framework in exceptional circumstances. This is designed to provide a discretion to a university in order to attract a person to its staff, who would, because of exceptional or scarce expertise and/or qualifications, command remuneration higher than the norm and who would not be prepared to work for the university unless so rewarded. The provisions of the framework do not apply to senior officer posts (above the grade of professor) whose remuneration is set by the Review Body. Annex B outlines the extent of resort to these arrangements in recent years.

Chapter Focus

This Chapter outlines the response of the universities to matters raised in the course of audit relating to the authority for the payment of certain elements of pay and allowances. It also reviews the arrangements for the control of external work at two universities.

Remuneration in the University Sector

4.3 In the academic year 2007/2008 the salary costs of the universities were just over €1 billion. The breakdown of those costs by type is shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Staff Costs by University, 2007/2008 Academic Year

Category of Staff	€m UCD	€m UCC	€m TCD	€m NUIG	€m UL	€m DCU	€m NUIM	€m Total
Total Academic Staff	117.4	87.8	76.1	60.0	42.4	36.8	26.2	446.7
Total Other Staff	117.2	63.5	62.4	47.0	27.2	23.3	24.4	365.0
Research Pay	47.1	48.0	43.3	31.0	18.2	25.0	11.9	224.5
Pension Supplementation	11.3	5.1	7.6	3.0	5.9	2.6	0.8	36.3
Total	293.0	204.4	189.4	141.0	93.7	87.7	63.3	1,072.5

²⁷ Section 25 of the Universities Act, 1997 provides that “there shall be paid by a university to the employees of that university, such remuneration, fees, allowances and expenses as may be approved from time to time by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Finance.”

Matters Arising on Audits

4.4 As part of the audit of staff costs in each of the universities a number of matters arose out of the examination of remuneration in the course of audits. These are outlined for each institution below.

University College Dublin

4.5 The remuneration package of the President, Registrar and Bursar were compared with the rates set by the Review Body and sanctioned by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Finance (the Ministers). The audit noted that the total remuneration package of the President exceeded the levels recommended by the Review Body after taking account of benefit-in-kind. The details are set out in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Presidential Remuneration Compared to Review Body Recommendations, 2004-2007

Date	Remuneration Received	Benefit-In-Kind Received ^a	Total Remuneration	Review Body Recommendation	Percentage Difference
	€	€	€	€	
30 June 2004	183,565	24,292	207,857	182,860	+14%
30 June 2005	191,293	54,518	245,811	193,101	+27%
30 June 2006	216,076	56,756	272,832	215,966	+26%
30 June 2007	214,650	58,700	273,350	226,895	+21%

Note:

- a Benefit-in-kind consisted of life assurance, income protection premium, private health insurance and on-campus residence. The on-campus residence element represented 80% of the benefit-in-kind payments for the years 2005 to 2007.

4.6 The remuneration package received by the Registrar and the Bursar exceeded sanctioned rates between 2001 and 2007. In 2007, the Registrar's remuneration package exceeded the sanctioned rate by €21,300 and the Bursar's remuneration package exceeded sanctioned by rates by €47,100.

4.7 The President noted that universities including UCD compete for a highly mobile international talent pool and are recognised as key drivers of economic development. He stated that Ireland would not be able to compete successfully for jobs if its universities were not competitive with international universities.

4.8 He drew attention to the non-existence of any prescribed process for seeking and granting approvals under Section 25 of the 1997 Act. However, he noted that details of all allowances were returned to the HEA on a regular basis and that no major issues were raised during the period 1997 to 2007 about the legitimate capacity of the University to contract with employees in respect of duties covered by those allowances.

4.9 In response to my enquiries in regard to the President's remuneration the University stated that Revenue approved allowances had been paid to the President representing the grossed-up value of non-vouched expenses and which, according to UCD, pertained elsewhere in the public sector at the time.

4.10 In regard to the Registrar and Bursar, UCD stated that

- the roles of Registrar and Bursar attracted a Revenue approved allowance for non-vouched expenses
- the statutory post of Secretary was suppressed in 2000 and its functions distributed between the Registrar and the Bursar with accompanying allowances to both for those additional duties
- the Bursar also undertook additional duties in a number of other functions.

4.11 UCD have stated that the additional payments to the Registrar and the Bursar were withdrawn early in 2009 but that it has always followed any statutory processes available to it in seeking approval for these allowances. UCD stated that the payments came on foot of contractual arrangements made in good faith and on the basis of its best understanding with regard to its power to contract with employees. It maintained that the University could not reasonably be held to be acting *ultra vires* and that the arrangements entered into were contractually binding and any attempt to disturb them could be successfully challenged.

4.12 Correspondence supplied for the period 1997 to 2007 between UCD and the HEA indicates that UCD were endeavouring to obtain approval from the Department for allowances in payment where approval had not been given. In 2008, UCD undertook not to pay any new allowances without the prior approval of the Department.

4.13 The President of UCD stressed that the University always accepted the authority of the Department in setting remuneration as provided by the Universities Act and when the University received explicit instructions from the Department to cease payments of unapproved allowances these were complied with.

4.14 UCD has proposed that in order to bring the matter to a conclusion

- allowances paid to staff covered by Report 42 of the Review Body²⁸ would cease from 1 May 2009 and a process for resolution of issues arising from the suspension of those allowances be put in place
- the salaries of those posts would be aligned with the recommendations of Report 42
- UCD would submit a case for remuneration for leadership positions in the context of the principles enunciated in Report 43²⁹
- for the future, a process for setting appropriate remuneration be agreed.

4.15 The HEA stated that there had been extensive correspondence on remuneration matters and that in a letter to all universities on 12 November 1997 it requested details on allowances and pay scales, in the context of the approval of the Ministers under Section 25(4) of the Universities Act, 1997.

²⁸ Report 42 of the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector was implemented in September 2007.

²⁹ Report 43 of the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector was implemented in July 2008.

4.16 In a letter dated 8 August 2001 the HEA stated that salaries approved by the Review Body should not be exceeded without prior approval. A further letter issued by the HEA on the 17 October 2001 stated that revision in salary scales requires the Ministers' approval and the University was asked not to take any further action in relation to three serving senior officers. On 3 June 2005, the HEA sought confirmation that the remuneration payable to posts covered by the Review Body was in compliance with the levels recommended by the Review Body.

4.17 On 4 July 2005, the HEA advised the University of the conditions laid down in Paragraph 4.6 of Report 39 of the Review Body³⁰ and requested that detailed justification be provided for allowances payable to senior posts. On 6 April 2006, the HEA informed the University that additional payments such as allowances should not be made without prior sanction from the Department.

4.18 The HEA stated that since that time, numerous meetings were held with the University and the Department on the subject of allowances. Correspondence also issued, including a letter on 20 February 2008, which requested the University to confirm that it would not pay any additional allowances without advance written approval of the Ministers.

Allowances Paid to Certain Senior Staff

4.19 A number of other senior staff were in receipt of allowances that had not been sanctioned by the Ministers as required under the Act. The relevant allowances paid in the period were as set out in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Allowances to Other Senior Staff in UCD, October 2006-September 2007

Post Holder	Number of Allowances	Amount of Allowance €	Total Cost of Allowance €
Vice Presidents	5	25,000	67,986
College Principals	4	25,000	100,000
College Vice Principals	13	15,000	142,583
Heads of School	41	7,500 - 25,000	382,066
Director of Institutes	18	2,413 - 25,000	204,996
Director of NVRL ^a	1	120,204	120,204
Total			1,017,835

Note:

- a The National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) was established to provide a national diagnostic and reference service for clinicians investigating virus infections. This member of staff is a full-time Academic Consultant with a joint appointment in UCD and St. Vincent's Hospital. He is also in receipt of a pensionable allowance in respect of his role as Director of NVRL.

4.20 In December 2008, the Department sanctioned the payment of Phase 1 of the increases agreed under Report 42 of the Review Body in the Public Sector and the final increases under Towards 2016 with the exception of those posts in receipt of allowances.

³⁰ Chapter 4 of Report 39 of the Review Body examined the posts of Registrar, Secretary and Bursar and recommended salary rates of the normal duties of those posts. Paragraph 4.6 stated that "additional payments should not be made unless the HEA, with the agreement of the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Finance is satisfied that the duties which attract these payments are ones which are additional to the normal duties of posts of Registrar, Secretary or Bursar."

4.21 In April 2009, the Department sanctioned the increases for other posts in UCD covered by Report 42 of the Review Body subject to the cessation of allowances in respect of all posts including relevant analogous grades without exception comprehended by the Review Body with effect from 1 April 2009. It specifically included the following conditions

- cessation of allowances in respect of all posts including relevant analogous grades, without exception, comprehended by the Review Body with effect from the 1 April 2009
- the University will not seek to reinstate the unsanctioned allowances
- no additional remuneration will be paid to staff in the absence of appropriate sanction in accordance with Section 25(4) of the Universities Act, 1997
- save in cases where allowances for particular posts ceased prior to the 14 September 2007, sanction for the implementation of increases in Report 42 and the final phase of Towards 2016 ... is strictly from the date of cessation of the allowances in each individual case and there will be no overlap under any circumstances.

4.22 In regard to why allowances not authorised by the Ministers were paid, UCD stated that

- These allowances have been the subject of very extensive correspondence between UCD and the HEA over a considerable number of years.
- Throughout all of that period, UCD made full and comprehensive returns to the HEA of all of the detail pertaining to such allowances.
- In addition, all of the senior allowances in question have now been terminated or are in the process of being terminated, as a result of a UCD proposal made to and accepted by the Department in March 2009, notwithstanding the legal and industrial relations issues which are now likely to flow from this cessation.
- UCD has always followed any statutory processes available to it in the seeking of approval for these allowances, where such approval was required, and the payment of the allowances came on foot of contractual arrangements it had entered into in good faith. All such allowances were internally approved and returned to the HEA on a regular basis, together with extensive background information.
- The correspondence and communications demonstrate that there were no major issues raised during the period 1999 to 2007 with regard to the capacity of the University to contract with its employees in respect of duties covered by these allowances.
- UCD believed itself to be fully compliant with the required approval process (in the absence of any prescribed format) through the mechanism of its regular and unchallenged reporting to the HEA. Once it became an issue, UCD made a series of reasonable proposals to address the situation, including the undertaking, in 2007 to pay no new allowances without approval and culminating in the withdrawal of existing allowances in 2009.
- It stated that these posts are a critical management layer within the University structure and are a key component in generating non-Exchequer income. A fundamental aim of the UCD strategy is to ensure that there is less of an emphasis on core Exchequer funding. These management roles are actively involved in creating new income streams under a number of distinct headings, including non-Exchequer fee income from internationalisation and the development of new programmes as well as commercialisation, philanthropy and funded research.

4.23 UCD have stated that, notwithstanding the views expressed above, the University has commenced the withdrawal of these allowances, fully cognisant of the contractual and industrial relations issues that this is already giving rise to. This withdrawal commenced in November 2009 and will continue in conjunction with the termination of each of the relevant contracts. In addition, no new allowances have been paid since 2007.

4.24 In September 2009, UCD made a comprehensive submission to the Department in respect of leadership positions in the context of Report 43. This submission included the posts outlined in Figure 4.3 (excluding directors). UCD pointed out that as of April 2010 the matter had not been determined by the Department and as a result, UCD has no approval mechanism to properly remunerate the headship of any of its schools.

4.25 The Accounting Officer noted that universities had undergone significant restructuring in recent years which resulted in the creation of a number of newly titled posts at top management level. The posts concerned attract remuneration greater than that of professor and, therefore, fall within the remit of the Review Body. A sample of these posts in both Level 1 (UCC) and Level 2 (DCU) bands was examined by the Review Body. The Review Body indicated that it would be a matter for the Department and the Department of Finance to subsequently set salaries for other relevant and comparable posts in the sector based on the Review Body's conclusions. Any consideration has to take account of Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009.

4.26 The Accounting Officer stated that in 1999, a common presentation format for supplying information on allowances to be considered under Section 25 of the Universities Act, 1997 was agreed between the HEA and the universities. Information was supplied in tabular form to the HEA for transmission to the Department. Details of allowances provided by the University in the past contained insufficient justification and rationale to allow proper consideration by the Department. In particular, the University had not defined the activities and responsibilities which were entirely outside normal duties and for which staff should receive additional pay. Prior to 2006, attempts by the HEA and the Department to secure comprehensive information from UCD in support of the payment of allowances were very protracted and did not meet with success. Consequently, in November 2006 the University was requested by the HEA to put arrangements in place to end the payment of additional allowances to senior staff. The unapproved allowances were eventually ceased by UCD in April 2009.

4.27 It remains the Department's view that in the absence of sanction there was no legal basis for the payment of additional remuneration to senior staff, including the President. The Department considers that the provisions of Section 25(4) of the Universities Act, 1997 takes precedence over contracts entered into by the University. Accordingly, both the initial making of the payments and their continuation was contrary to the Universities Act, 1997 and as a consequence *ultra vires* and a breach of public sector pay procedures and norms. The Department is supported in its view by legal advice.

4.28 With regard to the President's remuneration, the Accounting Officer noted that the provision of life assurance, income protection and private health insurance formed an integral part of the contract of employment entered into by the University. The benefits-in-kind amounted to additional remuneration which was not sanctioned. UCD subsequently confirmed in August 2009 that it had applied the terms of the Department's sanctions to ensure that all posts embraced by the Review Body were on approved salary scales.

Allowances to Other Staff

4.29 In September 2009, over 300 salaried staff were in receipt of allowances. About two thirds of the staff were in receipt of small allowances averaging under €100 per year in relation to service pay. Service pay is a historical allowance that has not been paid to any new staff for many years. 208 employees are in receipt of an average of €95 per annum. The remaining one third received more significant amounts in allowances averaging €9,500 per year. The audit could not find evidence that the Ministers had approved these allowances as required in the Act.

4.30 UCD stated that these allowances consist of a wide range of payments which have the origins of their approval in a variety of sources. These include medical payments covered under Health Service Executive agreements and norms, service pay which is covered under national wage agreements and individual labour court agreements.

4.31 The University reiterated its position that all allowances have been regularly reported to the HEA without any queries. It stated that it had made comprehensive submissions to the Department and the HEA on all of these allowances and has indicated, since 2007, that it will not pay any new allowance without the approval of the HEA or the Minister.

4.32 The Accounting Officer stated that the Department had been in prolonged contact with UCD to seek clarification and further information in support of a range of miscellaneous non-pensionable allowances paid to other staff not covered by the Review Body. Many of these were historical in nature and others were for the performance of additional duties. The Department has been in consultation with the Department of Finance concerning these allowances but to date has been unable to give sanction pending sufficient justification being supplied in each case by the University.

Starting Salary

4.33 The starting salary of individuals commencing employment in UCD in 2007/2008 was reviewed in the course of audit. The starting salary scale point of the 195 individuals who commenced employment in the period is shown by category of staff in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 Salary Point at Commencement – UCD 2007/2008

Staff Category	Scale Points ^a											Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Academic	-	10	17	9	6	15	10	2	-	1	-	70
Administrative	-	3	9	10	12	5	5	5	4	2	-	55
College Administrative	-	2	4	4	10	2	5	3	1	2	3	36
Computing Services	-	-	-	1	1	4	2	-	-	-	-	8
Library	-	1	5	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	10
Restaurant Staff	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Services	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Technical Staff	-	2	6	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	12
Total	-	19	42	27	31	29	23	11	5	5	3	195

Note:

a Scales vary from 1 point to 15 points – there are 52 scales with more than 11 points. All appointments were made below or at the 11th point.

4.34 Figure 4.4 indicates that no staff were appointed at the first point on the salary scale. Just under 70% were appointed above the third point on the relevant salary scale. The starting salary for all eight computer services staff appointed was above the third point on the salary scale as compared with just over 60% in the case of new academic appointments.

4.35 The review found that qualifying criteria used to justify departing from the commencement point on the salary scale to the appointment at a higher grade point were not recorded or specified in advance.

4.36 UCD have outlined their policy regarding commencement salaries as follows

- The initial salary for all employees is negotiated at the time of appointment. Typical factors considered include relevant credentials, strength of expertise, experience and competitiveness of the discipline or field in the marketplace. In addition to complying with the established salary scale for the position at the time of appointment, the University is expected to consider internal and external market data in determining the initial salary. UCD also complies with approval given by the appropriate budgetary bodies within the University before a salary offer can be finalised.
- Salaries are paid in accordance with scales and grades agreed nationally with the HEA (part-time staff covered by these conditions are being paid pro-rata).
- UCD also noted that during the years 1995-2008 when the economy experienced unprecedented growth, staff coming into the University from other public sector roles and private industry were on salaries over and above the first point on the scale so from a practical perspective, it was not feasible to put them on the first point of the scale.

4.37 UCD stated that commencement salaries are determined using a combination of the expertise, experience and competitiveness of those staff being recruited from the discipline in the market place.

4.38 As regards seeking sanction from the Minister in relation to commencement salaries for staff on-scale UCD stated that it is not required to seek such sanction and noted that

- UCD operates salary scales agreed with the HEA/Department and operates within the parameters of those scales
- in addition, many positions advertised and filled in UCD require candidates of significant experience and, therefore, the first point of the salary scale would not be the appropriate commencement salary
- moreover, and in particular prior to the current economic downturn, UCD operated in a highly competitive national and international employment market where skills could be in short supply and market rates had to be paid for the best candidates.

4.39 The Accounting Officer noted that universities do not normally consult the Department in relation to the starting salary of individual employees as it is not a requirement under the Universities Act, 1997. However, in the absence of compelling reasons the starting pay on appointment should be at the minimum of the scale. It would be desirable that the criteria for departing from the commencement point on the salary scale should be cleared with the Department.

Performance Bonus

4.40 Between 2005 and 2008, UCD paid €266,000 to twelve staff in performance related bonuses. The details are set out in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Bonus Payments to Senior Staff^a, 2005-2008

Employee	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
	€	€	€	€	€
1	-	9,973	14,039	12,888	36,900
2	24,014	25,667	28,078	27,207	104,966
3	-	-	11,976	12,275	24,251
4	-	-	6,081	-	6,081
5	-	-	5,000	-	5,000
6 ^b	-	5,950	-	15,592	21,542
7	-	7,000	-	5,467	12,467
8	-	6,500	-	7,184	13,684
9	-	5,250	-	8,290	13,540
10 ^b	-	-	-	9,706	9,706
11	-	-	-	15,000	15,000
12	-	-	-	2,681	2,681
Total	24,014	60,340	65,174	116,290	265,818

Notes:

- a With the exception of Employee 3, Employee 6 and Employee 10, the bonus payments made in 2008 relate to performances in earlier periods.
- b Employee 3, Employee 6 and Employee 10 received bonus payments in 2008 totalling €29,986 relating to periods that straddled 2007 and 2008. The remaining €7,587 related to previous periods.

4.41 UCD stated that the performance related payments to the individuals set out in Figure 4.5 would not be made in respect of 2008 performance. The background setting out the cases was

- Due to the fixed term nature of most of the related contracts, it applied a performance related element as part of the overall remuneration package. UCD was not aware of any external formal or documented approval mechanism relating to these payments. UCD has received no formal directive relating to the detailed approval mechanisms that may be necessary in these cases.
- As these performance-related payments are set out in the terms of the contract for each post-holder, UCD has no plans to recoup these payments from the relevant staff to the extent that they remain unapproved. However, UCD is committed to adhering to any future formally documented process that may emerge.

4.42 The Accounting Officer noted that there is no provision for the payment of a performance bonus to staff in the university sector. UCD neither sought nor received sanction to apply a scheme of additional performance related payments. UCD has at all times been informed that all forms of remuneration require to be sanctioned in accordance with the provisions of the Universities Act. Sanctions issued specified the total remuneration approved in each case. The Department was unaware of this scheme before it was reported by me and is currently in correspondence with the University about the matter.

University College Cork

4.43 Prior to the implementation of Report 42 in September 2007 and Report 43 in July 2008, certain senior management staff were in receipt of unapproved allowances. The details are set out in Figure 4.6 together with the date of cessation.

Figure 4.6 Unapproved Senior Management Allowances

Post	Unapproved Allowance €	Cessation of Allowances
Bursar ^a	2,208	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic	2,100	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Vice President Research	3,693	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Head of College - Science, Engineering and Food Science	14,039	Ceased in 2007 with effect from 14 September 2007
Acting Head of College of Business and Law ^b	34,947	Retired in 2008

Source: University College Cork.

Notes:

- a The Employment Appeals Tribunal is due to consider an appeal by the University, against a decision of a Rights Commissioner, under the Payment of Wages Act, 1991. The Rights Commissioner directed that the rates of remuneration previously paid to the Bursar, in accordance with his contract, be restored going forward with retrospection.
- b The Acting Head of College of Business and Law was in receipt of a salary of €181,983 as at 1 March 2008. This post-holder was nearing retirement when the vacancy arose and did not remain in the post for a full year. This salary was negotiated by reference to that of the previous incumbent who was a framework employee. The current post-holder was appointed in July 2008 at professorial salary plus an approved allowance.

4.44 In addition, there are a number of posts in UCC that are covered by Report 42 at professor grade or who were in receipt of allowances. UCC have provided the information on the remuneration and allowances paid. The details together with the timing of cessation are set out in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Unapproved Allowances Paid to Senior Staff in UCC

Post	Unapproved Allowance €	Cessation of Allowances
Director of Biological Services Unit	10,458	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Dean of Law	14,038	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Dean of Food Science and Technology	14,038	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Dean of Commerce	10,003	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Vice President Planning, Communications and Development	30,142	Retired in 2009
Vice Head of College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Studies (Retired)	5,002	Ceased in 2007 with application of Report 42
Vice Head of College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Studies	5,127	Allowance ceased November 2009
Head of Department – Mathematics	14,677	Allowance ceased June 2008

Source: University College Cork.

Trinity College Dublin

4.45 Between 2002 and 2006, the Provost was in receipt of salary and allowances in excess of that approved by the Ministers. During 2006, TCD confirmed that the allowance paid to the Provost would be subsumed into the salary recommended by the Review Body. Between 2004 and 2006 the Provost received €6,944 in excess of rates sanctioned by the Minister. The remuneration paid to the Provost in 2007, 2008 and 2009 was within the limits approved by the Department.

4.46 During 2007 and 2008, TCD underwent restructuring and the post of College Secretary reverted to a core Secretary role³¹. A new post of Chief Operations Officer which has responsibility for the management of administrative and support services was also created. The remuneration of three senior management posts has been the subject of recommendations by the Review Group Report 42³².

4.47 Because Trinity College were paying additional allowances at professor level, the Department delayed sanctioning the implementation of Report 42 and a 2.5% national wage increase due on 1 September 2008 until 1 April 2009. The Department then sanctioned the increases when Trinity College confirmed that all allowances in payment to professors would cease.

4.48 The Accounting Officer stated that in March 2009 TCD confirmed that allowances paid to professorial staff would cease with effect from 1 April 2009.

³¹ When established, the revised Secretary role was remunerated at a lower rate of pay than the previous post of College Secretary.

³² Report 42 made recommendations in relation to the pay rates for the posts of Registrar, Bursar and Secretary.

4.49 The University's submission in respect of senior management positions is under examination by the Department in consultation with the Department of Finance. However, implementation of the recommendations contained in Report 43 of the Review Body have to be considered in the context of the provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Act, 2009.

4.50 Trinity College has implemented a new governance structure, central to which is the role of Deans of Faculties. In October 2007, Trinity College made a formal submission in regard to remuneration to the HEA. On the appointment of Deans in January 2008, the matter had not been resolved. The University stated that it felt it appropriate to offer an allowance from the current schedule of allowances pending the early resolution of the issue of remuneration for new posts.

4.51 In relation to heads of school, the then Staff Secretary wrote to the HEA in August 2005, further to the decision by the Board of the College, noting *"The allowances that are paid over and above the basic rate are generally associated with a particular post, for example, Head of School, Dean or Tutor."*

4.52 The Secretary enclosed a list of the allowances paid to staff covered by the recommendations of the Review Body and the numbers of such staff that are in receipt of each allowance. The list indicated instances where payments were made from sources other than core funding. It noted that an allowance for head of school and head of discipline was being implemented as the new academic structure was implemented, there would be twenty new school or vice deanery posts in the next academic year.

4.53 While, in the interim, the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Service has dealt with university management positions (Report 43), the matter of remuneration of senior posts in Trinity College has not been concluded and is currently under consideration by the Departments.

National University of Ireland, Galway

4.54 During the academic years 1999/2000 to 2006/2007 NUIG paid additional allowances amounting to €396,982 to the President, the Registrar/Deputy President and the Bursar. On 27 November 2006 the HEA informed NUIG that it and the Department were of the view that these allowances were contrary to the Universities Act, 1997, unapproved and *ultra vires* and requested immediate cessation of the payments and to consider recoupment. On 21 December 2006, NUIG agreed to cease the payments. Details of the payments made between 1999 and 2006 are outlined in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8 NUIG Allowances paid to Senior Management between the Academic Years 1999/2000 and 2006/2007

Academic Year	President	Registrar and Deputy President	Bursar	Total
	€	€	€	€
1999/2000	4,479	-	-	4,479
2000/2001	27,513	8,737	8,737	44,987
2001/2002	29,551	15,221	15,221	59,993
2002/2003	30,733	15,966	15,966	62,665
2003/2004	31,583	16,408	16,408	64,399
2004/2005	33,305	17,053	17,053	67,411
2005/2006	36,373	18,879	18,879	74,131
2006/2007	9,440	4,737	4,737	18,914
Total	202,977	97,001	97,001	396,979

4.55 Information was sought from the University in regard to the payment of allowances to the President, Registrar and Bursar up to 2006/2007 and what steps had been taken to recoup the unapproved payments.

4.56 NUIG informed me that when advised by the HEA that the allowances to the President, Registrar, and Bursar should cease, these payments were summarily ceased on 31 December 2006.

4.57 The University stated that, following discussions involving the former President, the Department, the HEA and the University, and while fully accepting that the allowances had been explicitly authorised by the Governing Authority on foot of a detailed report and recommendation by a committee appointed by it, the former President agreed to pay back the allowance and discussion is ongoing with the tax authorities to agree the correct mechanism for repayment.

4.58 The University has been advised that there is no basis to recoup monies from the Bursar or the former Registrar.

4.59 The Accounting Officer noted that the University has confirmed that the former President has agreed to repay in full the total amount of the unauthorised allowances which he received during his term of office. She stated that the University had also recently indicated that it had received agreement from the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the repayment procedure and the treatment of PAYE and PRSI.

4.60 She also noted that the University had stated in correspondence that allowances previously paid to the Bursar and Registrar were non-pensionable and paid from non-Exchequer funds.

Allowances Paid to Senior Staff

4.61 Five Vice Presidents were also in receipt of allowances without the required sanction of the Minister.

4.62 The President of NUIG has informed me that the Vice Presidential allowances were in place before the Universities Act and, in fact, were approved by University Statute placed before Oireachtas Éireann in 1992 and it remains the view of the University that these allowances are valid and properly reported. He confirmed that currently, no individual, whose salary falls within the remit of the Review Body is in receipt of an allowance.

4.63 The outstanding issue in respect of the Vice Presidents was subject to a Rights Commission hearing which ruled in favour of the individuals. The matter has been appealed to the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

4.64 In regard to the allowances paid to senior staff the Accounting Officer stated that the University confirmed to the Department in March 2009 that the allowance for the current Vice President for Research would cease with effect from 31 March 2009, that the allowance for the former incumbent had ceased in June 2008 and that the allowance paid to the former Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs had ceased in August 2008. The former Vice President for Research challenged the withdrawal of the additional allowance and a Rights Commissioner found in his favour. The decision has been appealed by NUIG to the Employment Appeals Tribunal under the Payment of Wages Act but has not yet been heard.

Allowances Paid to Other Staff

4.65 Allowances were not expressly approved by the Minister. During 2008, 55 staff were paid these unapproved allowances. The details of allowances paid to staff in 2008 are outlined in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9 NUIG Allowances Paid to Other Staff in 2008

Nature of allowance	Number of recipients	Allowance approved by Department
Shift allowances	45	No
Supervisor allowances	10	No

4.66 In 2006, the Department expressed concern that the shift allowances appeared out of line with standard public service practice arrangements and requested that NUIG provide further information on these allowances, including the relevant attendance commitment attaching to them. The Department also requested information on the supervisor allowances.

4.67 NUIG stated that in the case of both allowances the position was that these payments were agreed with the recognised trade unions before the coming into force of the Universities Act, are in line with public sector norms and have been reported properly. It stated that there are no unapproved allowances, in that sense, and that the University is waiting on a formal response to correspondence with the Department on this issue.

4.68 In this connection, the University has provided additional information sought by the HEA and while the Department has not provided formal sanction for these allowances, there has been no indication that they should be withdrawn.

4.69 In regard to the allowances paid to other staff the Accounting Officer stated that following the provision of additional information and clarification by NUIG, the Department is currently in consultation with the Department of Finance with a view to reaching agreement on sanction for the payment of the allowances.

University of Limerick

4.70 It was noted in the course of audit that during the financial years 2007 and 2008 there were three persons being paid, contemporaneously, through the university payroll at the president scale.

4.71 On 25 April 2006, 'A' stepped down from his position as President due to ill health. However, he remained on as President Emeritus remunerated at the President rate until his retirement in 31 August 2008.

4.72 After his retirement, 'B' was appointed to the position of Acting President to be remunerated at the President scale. He ceased to be in this role from 1 May 2007. On stepping down as Acting President 'B' did not revert to his previous grade (Vice President) but remained on as a President Emeritus, paid at the President scale. A memorandum was agreed which defined this position — he was to take responsibility for the large capital works planned in the University. 'B' retired in April 2009.

4.73 After his retirement 'B' was in receipt of his pension entitlement. Additionally, he was retained by the University on a part-time basis for which he was remunerated at the rate of 50% of the equivalent of the presidential salary scale.

4.74 On 1 May 2007, 'C' was appointed to the position of President on a ten-year contract.

4.75 The University was requested to

- outline the circumstances giving rise to the payment of the three officers at the President scale and, in particular, whether the University obtained authorisation from the Minister to pay three employees at the President scale
- in relation to 'A' who stepped down from his position in April 2006, and 'B' who ceased his role as Acting President in May 2007, to outline their roles as Presidents Emeritus and the duration, terms and conditions pertaining thereto
- in relation to 'B', to indicate the basis on which this level of service as Acting President entitled him to be pensionable based on a President's pay rate.

4.76 The University informed me that in April 2006 'A' stepped down due to a serious health condition as he could no longer perform the full range of duties of President but availed of his entitlement to accrued annual leave until June 2006. However, at the point of stepping down 'A' was vital to the University of Limerick Foundation (ULF) as he was the primary contact for a number of major philanthropic donors. Therefore, the University agreed to his secondment to the Foundation in order that he might finalise a number of donations and undertake other activities appropriate to his expertise. In accordance with standard secondment arrangements, 'A' was to be paid through the University of Limerick payroll with the Foundation then reimbursing the University.

4.77 'B' served as Vice President Administration and Secretary for a long period of time and had responsibility for Finance, Administration, Buildings and Estates as well as being Corporate Secretary. He informed the University of his intention to retire in 2005. The University set about replacing him and agreed that he would stay in post until he was replaced and a transition period for the new post holder completed. Upon analysing the role it became clear that the role was too much for any one individual and it was decided to go to the market for a Vice President, Finance and a Vice President Administration and Secretary. The Vice President, Finance post was filled, however, the Vice President Administration and Secretary post was not successfully filled and was vacant at the time coming up to the appointment of the new President. The University stressed that it was important to note the foregoing as it gave an insight into the executive management structure in the University at the time of the appointment of the new President.

4.78 When it became clear that 'A' was going to step down as President due to ill health and go on secondment to the Foundation, the Governing Authority appointed 'B' to the post of Acting President while the University went to the market to fill the post of President. 'B' retained the office of Acting President until the appointment of the new President on 1 May 2007.

4.79 'B' had again indicated his intention to retire once the new President took up office. In February 2007, the Governing Authority, in light of the fact that he was involved in a large number of key strategic initiatives for the University, agreed that his services would be retained following his stepping down as Acting President in order that he might see through to completion a large number of capital projects as well as the implementation of the new Graduate Entry Medical School. 'B' had also accrued a substantial amount of annual leave. The agreement entered into with him by the University provided for him to work through his accrued annual leave at a pace that would meet with the needs of the University at that time. He retired in April 2009.

4.80 The University stated that it did not seek approval for the arrangements relating to 'A' and 'B' from the HEA and the Minister.

4.81 'A' was seconded to the Foundation until 31 August 2008 and his salary was funded by the Foundation. For the period to 31 August 2008 while he was on secondment to the Foundation, he undertook academic and other activities on behalf of the University in areas appropriate to his expertise. In carrying out these activities 'A' was to ensure there would be no conflict with the role and function of the next appointed President.

4.82 'B' was retained by the University for the period 2007-2009. He was to undertake a range of responsibilities during that time including continuing as Chairperson of the University's Physical Development Committee, leadership of individual Building Committees and Managing Director of the Plassey Campus Centre.

4.83 The University stated that the pension of 'B' was based on salary at retirement (salary can be averaged over three years where a lower grade applied in the three years prior to retirement) and the number of years service. It stated that B's pension was based on his salary from 1 May 2006 to April 2009.

4.84 The Accounting Officer stated that the University did not consult the Department and did not receive sanction to pay three employees contemporaneously during 2007 and 2008 at the level of President. It is not clear what provision was included in the contract of employment for President 'A' which catered for vacating the post due to ill health. Remuneration entitlement during sick leave is normally six months at full pay and six months at half pay. The term 'Emeritus' is understood to refer to a retiree who retains the title on an honorary basis. President B's acting-up allowance should have ceased in May 2007 following the appointment of a full-time President. His pension entitlement upon his retirement in April 2009 should have taken this into account. The Department is taking the matter up with the University.

Allowances Paid to Senior Staff

4.85 The University paid acting up allowances to senior staff for the purposes of undertaking higher duties in addition to the salary levels authorised by the Minister.

4.86 During the audit it was noted that three persons in Vice President roles were in receipt of unauthorised allowances. Two consecutive Vice Presidents Academic and Registrar received €14,300 and €20,700 per annum respectively and one Vice President Research was in receipt of €40,900 per annum.

4.87 As a result, the Department had not sanctioned the payment of Phase 1 of the increases recommended under Report 42 of the Review Body or the final increases under Towards 2016.

4.88 The University informed me that the allowances that applied to the Vice President Academic and Registrar and the Vice President Research have been discontinued and both post holders have reverted to the Vice President salary scale, which is the salary scale recommended in Report 42 for Registrars, Secretaries and Bursars.

4.89 The Accounting Officer stated that the University wrote to the Department in June 2009 to confirm that allowances previously paid to the Vice President Academic and Registrar and the Vice President Research were ceased with effect from the 31 March 2009. The application of increases under Report 42 of the Review Body and the final increase under Towards 2016 were subsequently sanctioned by the Department to be paid from the date of cessation of the allowance in each case. Accordingly, the current maximum salary for Vice President Academic and Registrar should not exceed that of the traditional second-tier post of Registrar and that of the Vice President Research should not exceed that of Professor. The Review Body in Report 42 did not recommend a salary for Vice Presidents.

Dublin City University

4.90 In relation to the payment of allowances to senior staff, DCU have confirmed that these are paid to the Deputy President, the Vice President Research and the Executive Deans as provided for in Report 43 of the Review Body.

4.91 In regard to allowances paid to heads of school who are not covered by the Review Body, the President of DCU supplied this information as outlined in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10 Allowances to staff in DCU not covered by the Review Body Recommendations, 2008

Post Holder	Amount of Allowance €
<i>Heads of School</i>	
Associate Professor	5,080
Senior Lecturer	7,620
Lecturer (Above Bar)	10,160
<i>Other Acting Positions</i>	Double increment or 1 st point on higher scale
<i>Additional Duties</i>	One or two increments as appropriate

4.92 The President added that these allowances have been notified to the HEA on an annual basis under allowances to be approved under Section 25(4) of the Universities Act, 1997. Following the provision of additional information and clarification by DCU, the Department is currently in consultation with the Department of Finance with a view to reaching agreement on sanction for the payment of the allowances.

4.93 The Accounting Officer stated that the second-tier post of Secretary, which is comprehended by the Review Body, has been in receipt of an unapproved allowance. In view of this, the Department has not sanctioned either the application of the increase under Report 42 of the Review Body or the final increase under Towards 2016 from 1 September 2008 in respect of the Secretary post.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

4.94 During 2008, the total remuneration recommended for President was €217,061. While his salary that year was €211,090 he was in receipt of the following additional benefits

- the University provide funding for the President's Health Insurance amounting to €1,704 in 2007
- the President's car was funded by the Maynooth University Foundation up to May 2009. The taxable value of this was €15,806 in 2007.

4.95 The total remuneration paid to the President during 2008 exceeded the sanctioned amounts by approximately €11,500. The Review Body emphasised in Report 42 that the levels of remuneration recommended in its report are intended to represent total remuneration for the posts concerned and no additional payments should be made other than in situations where the HEA, with the agreement of the Minister and the Minister for Finance is satisfied that the duties which attract these payments are ones which are additional to the normal duties of the post in question.

4.96 The University stated that the general arrangements for the President were approved by the Governing Authority prior to the completion of the search and selection process for the new President. A report on 'negotiating terms' to be used was placed before the Authority in November 2003 and approved. The general arrangements entered into by the University with the President conform to the approved terms. He was appointed following an international competition. Health insurance and provision of a motor car is a normal part of the remuneration package of Senior Officers in the UK from where the President was hired.

4.97 In regard to the motor car being funded by Maynooth University Foundation, NUIM has stated that no public monies were used in providing the car, as private donations met this Foundation commitment. The contract of employment of the President was forwarded to the HEA shortly after he took office. Benefit-in-kind was properly accounted for in relation to both the car and the health insurance. NUIM added that the arrangement for the provision of a car by the Foundation ceased with effect from 1 May 2009.

4.98 The Accounting Officer stated that the additional benefits paid to the President in respect of health insurance and the provision of a car were not sanctioned by the Department. The level of remuneration approved by the Department represented the total inclusive remuneration for the post of President. The Department is taking the matter up with the University.

General Views of the Irish Universities Association

4.99 The IUA noted that the issues identified in relation to remuneration arose against a backdrop of significant strategic and structural change in the university sector, which necessitated the strengthening of management structures and competencies and those changes had not been reflected in the system of pay determination.

4.100 A review of the remuneration of the heads of third level education institutions, Professors, Registrars, Secretaries, and Bursars was to be carried out as part of the sixth general review of the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector (Report 38). However, in the course of preparation of that report the Review Body concluded that the posts in the third level education sector could best be examined in a separate exercise after their report on the other groups had been presented.

4.101 The subsequent report of the Review Body presented to the Minister for Finance in March 2001 (Report 39) included recommendations in relation to the levels of remuneration appropriate to the Heads of Universities, Registrars, Secretaries and Bursars. It did not, however, make recommendations in relation to the remuneration of Professors.

4.102 It was not until Report 43 of the Review Body (July 2008) that the remuneration of other university senior management including vice presidents, heads of school and executive deans was reviewed. Even then this review was undertaken only on a partial basis for identified posts in a subset of universities.

4.103 The IUA noted that Report 43 was significant to the extent that it, for the first time, addressed the nature and level of remuneration for the relevant senior posts and set out some principles which might apply to the remuneration of those posts generally.

General Comments of the Department of Finance

4.104 The Accounting Officer of the Department of Finance stated that the withdrawal of unsanctioned allowances was dealt with in the context of the application of increases recommended by the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector. Following discussions between the Department and the Department of Education and Skills, the application of increases arising from the Review Body Report 42 was made conditional on the withdrawal of unsanctioned allowances to grades coming within the remit of the Review Body.

4.105 He stated that the Department was unaware of the practice within UCD of applying performance-related payments. No sanction was given in respect of those payments. The Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector indicated in Report 42 that there had been discussions on the possible introduction of a scheme of performance-related awards and that proposals were under consideration by the Department and the HEA. The Review Body recommended that the parties bring their consideration to a conclusion so that a scheme of performance-related awards could be introduced for the groups coming within the remit of the Review Body³³. However, no such scheme was approved for the university sector.

4.106 In regard to entry above the minimum point of salary scales he stated that in general, the policy is that recruitment should be at the minimum point of the scale but entry above this level may be approved in certain circumstances.

³³ Paragraphs 20.21 and 20.22 of Review Body Report 42.

4.107 Guidelines were issued to Personnel Officers in a confidential letter in 1994 regarding the starting salary at open competitions for appointments to the civil service and the conditions that must be fulfilled to allow entry above the minimum of the scale.

4.108 The Department of Finance is reviewing this policy in the light of changes in the employment market.

External Work

4.109 Academic staff in some universities are facilitated to engage in external consultancy work in order to gain knowledge of developments in their relevant disciplines. Universities should have adequate procedures in place to monitor and control staff consultancy work.

University College Dublin

4.110 UCD has a policy under which approval of external consultancy and other remunerated activities undertaken in a private capacity is given provided that those activities

- are related to the academic and professional interests of staff
- do not exceed two sessions per week or 20% of working time
- do not interfere with the performance of normal academic duties and are recommended by the head of school
- do not give rise to any conflict of interest for the individual member of staff
- do not give rise to a vicarious liability on the part of the University.

4.111 The policy provides for monitoring the actual level of external work undertaken under these arrangements. External remunerated activities are required to be controlled by and reported to each college on an annual return. Failure to submit the annual return (even in cases where no consultancy has been undertaken) is in breach of policy. Between September 2007 and August 2008, the University issued 998 forms for completion by academics. 884 forms were returned representing a response rate of 89%.

4.112 Returns for the period 2007/2008 for the College of Engineering, Mathematical and Physical Sciences were examined during the audit. Most of the forms examined recorded a nil return. A small number of returns indicated that substantial work was performed. The return records the nature of the activity undertaken and the time input.

4.113 In response to my enquiries, UCD stated that academic staff have a contractual requirement to engage in external work once this does not conflict with normal academic duties and has the approval of the University³⁴.

4.114 Full-time members of the academic staff are required to complete an annual return which is sent from each school to its relevant central academic unit. At present, this data is not monitored specifically to estimate the value of the related academic time paid for by UCD. It stated that to do so would be a significant and expensive exercise which would be difficult to justify in the current climate.

³⁴ This is a provision applying to academic staff throughout the university sector.

4.115 The University stated that as a matter of general principle, it is considered that the participation of academic staff in this work can bring direct benefits to the University. The policy enables the academic community to expand and maintain its professional competence, keep abreast of developments and innovation in business and the professions and assists in supporting the Irish economy and reputation of the University.

University College Cork

4.116 A report prepared by the Internal Audit unit in UCC in April 2009 identified a number of issues with the professional consultancy activities of members of the academic staff of the University.

4.117 No formal records are maintained by university departments of academics' working time in order to establish staff time and attendance during work hours. As consultancy activities are a subset of the employment period it was not possible to determine with certainty the level of involvement of the University's academic staff in undertaking (university or private) consultancy work.

4.118 The following were the key risks to the University that were identified

- use of resources without financial return
- stress/overstretch on academic staff resources
- inappropriate use of public funds, insufficient funding for core teaching and learning activities
- inappropriate/inadequate supervision of consultancy activities which could lead to a perceived conflict or impaired University independence.

4.119 UCC stated that the University's policy on consultancy provides that "Each staff member engaged in consultancy or other external commercial activity is required to declare such activity in writing to his/her Head of Department/Institute/Centre/Unit and to the Vice President for Research. This is done by completing a Declaration of Consultancy or Other External Commercial Activities." The staff member is required to declare the commercial value of the consultancy. Furthermore, in common with other state employees, academics holding posts with salaries greater than €100,000 per annum, which include all professors and many associate professors, are required to return an annual declaration of interests.

4.120 In response to my specific queries the President informed me that

- The relevant activity must be authorised by the individual's line manager, usually the head of department or school or the director of the research centre in which they are based.
- The head of school or department is responsible for the effectiveness of core teaching and learning in each area. When authorising consultancy and counter-signing the declaration they are guaranteeing that the core activities of the unit are not adversely affected.
- A Policy on Conflict of Commitment and Conflict of Interest states that the individual has the absolute duty to disclose all potential or actual conflicts of commitment or interest to the head of school or department and then to the Vice President for Research. These principles are designed to protect the University's independence.

4.121 A meeting took place between the Internal Auditor and the Vice President for Research on 19 August 2009 to discuss the recommendations of the review and to agree a timeline for the implementation of changes. The principal recommendations were

- amendment of the policies to address controls and compliance issues

- amendment of voluntary disclosure and extension of reporting obligations to all staff and
- the introduction of separate policies on consultancy and conflict of interest and commitment.

4.122 A follow-up meeting took place between the Vice President for Research and the Audit Committee of the Governing Body on 6 November 2009 to validate these recommendations and to explore consultancy as a potential source of additional revenue for the University.

4.123 All staff members (both academic and administrative) have been reminded of the requirement to comply with the University's policies on Consultancy and Conflict of Commitment and Conflict of Interest.

4.124 The policy on Consultancy has been redrafted to include an "Annual Declaration of Compliance with Policies on Consultancy and Conflict of Commitment and Conflict of Interest" to be completed by all staff. The redrafted policy is in the internal consultation process, with a deadline for implementation of June 2010.

Observations of the Accounting Officer

4.125 The Universities Act, 1997 includes detailed provisions regarding the payment of staff, whose remuneration is subject to specific approval. In accordance with Section 25(4) of the Act all forms of remuneration, including fees, allowances and expenses payable in each University, are required to be approved by the Minister for Education and Skills with the consent of the Minister for Finance. Accordingly, in the context of the provisions of the legislation universities do not have discretion to independently set levels of remuneration or to authorise the payment of allowances and any payments made without such approval are considered to be *ultra vires*.

4.126 In very limited and exceptional circumstances a university may depart from approved levels of remuneration where the governing authority is satisfied that it is necessary to meet the objects of the University but it may only do so in accordance with a framework agreed between the universities and the HEA. The purpose of the framework is to enable a university to attract a person to its staff, who would, because of exceptional or scarce expertise and/or qualifications, command remuneration higher than the norm and who would not be prepared to work for the University unless so rewarded. Where a departure involves an appointment to a non-academic post requiring professional or technical qualifications and experience, the conditions agreed shall be in line with those applying to positions with similar responsibilities and employment conditions in the broader Public Sector. The provisions of the framework do not apply to senior officer posts of Professor and above, who are comprehended by the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector.

4.127 Since the inception of the Act universities have continuously been advised both by the Department and the HEA that allowances in the nature of pay or other emoluments should not be paid without prior written sanction.

4.128 In Report 42, the Review Body stated that despite its previous recommendations it was informed that allowances over and above salary levels it had recommended in Report 39 were still being paid. As a result, the Review Body recommended that in any situation where an unauthorised allowance was being paid no increase in salary arising from the report should be applied until the allowance had been withdrawn. This recommendation was accepted by Government which decided that where unapproved payments were being made no increases on foot of the Review Body should be implemented until the position was regularised.

4.129 Accordingly, each Accounting Officer designated under the Universities Act was requested to confirm the total remuneration for every member of each grade comprehended by the Review Body, including situations where an allowance was currently being paid or had previously been paid for the performance of extra duties. The unapproved allowances related principally to senior management posts.

4.130 With the agreement of the Department of Finance, the Department only approved the Review Body increases where it was satisfied that the institutions concerned had fully complied in all respects with previous sanctions on salary levels. In cases where unapproved allowances were being paid, sanction for the implementation of increases in Report 42 and the final phase of Towards 2016 in September 2008 was strictly from the date of cessation of the allowances. Each University was also requested to confirm that it would not seek to reinstate the unsanctioned allowances and that no additional remuneration would be paid to staff in the absence of appropriate sanction in accordance with Section 25(4) of the Universities Act, 1997.

4.131 Following prolonged and extensive contacts and correspondence between the Department, Department of Finance, the HEA and each of the universities, agreement was reached in April 2009 which provided for the cessation of the unapproved allowances to senior staff in the sector and which regularised the remuneration of the individuals concerned.

4.132 The Department is currently examining a range of allowances to other grades in the sector not covered by the Review Body, many of which are historical in nature and which predate the Universities Act. The Department has sought more comprehensive information from each of the universities to allow consideration of these allowances.

Conclusions

The Universities Act, 1997 while allowing universities to control the numbers and grading of staff provides that salary levels should be approved by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Finance.

A number of instances were noted where the requirement for ministerial sanction was not fully complied with. In particular,

- remuneration of senior staff exceeded levels approved
- unapproved allowances were paid to certain senior staff.

Certain performance related bonuses were also operated without sanction.

The Accounting Officer has stated that the Department has consistently taken the view that the commonly used term ‘total remuneration’ is self-explanatory. For the avoidance of doubt it comprises basic salary and all other elements, irrespective of the source of funding, and includes, for example, allowances, benefits-in-kind or in cash apart from superannuation, annual leave and sick leave arrangements. The Department does not accept that performance related bonuses are separate or distinct from total remuneration. The Department is in discussion with the Department of Finance in relation to centrally agreed criteria governing the starting salary of individual employees on appointment.

In general, steps have been taken to cease the extra payments. However, in most instances these decisions have not had retrospective effect.

There is a need to clarify the definition of total remuneration and, in particular, whether and to what extent recourse to trust funds are permissible.

In one university it was noted that new appointments were made at various points on existing salary scales above the minimum starting point.

There appears to be a need for some centrally agreed starting pay rules to ensure that the spirit of the legislation is observed.

Staff in universities are permitted to engage in consultancy work not exceeding 20%³⁵ of working time.

There would be merit in reviewing the arrangements for the monitoring, control and evaluation of this activity so as to ensure that value accrues to the university for the expenditure incurred while staff engage in this work.

In particular, the value of university remunerated time associated with this activity should be captured. It would also be useful if the commercial value of the consultancy were captured and the overall issue of intellectual property rights clarified.

³⁵ In NUIG, the maximum time allowed for consultancy work by full-time academic staff has been reduced to 10% with effect from September 2009.

Annex A Process for Establishing Remuneration Levels in Universities

To date the Review Body has published three reports that specifically recommend salary rates for the third level sector³⁶.

- Report 39 issued in March 2001 set salary scales for a total of 27 posts in the third level sector and included the role of president or provost, registrars, secretaries and bursars in the university sector.
- Report 42 published in September set revised salary scales for those grades and also set a recommended salary rate for professors³⁷. It also made specific reference to the payments being made to some posts in addition to salary and stated that the salaries recommended represented their view of the appropriate salary for the normal duties of the posts concerned. The Review Body reiterated its view first set out in Report 39 that payments additional to the recommended salaries should not be made unless the HEA, with the agreement of the Minister For Education and Skills and the Minister for Finance was satisfied that the duties which attract these payments are ones which are additional to the normal duties of the post in question. Accordingly, Report 42 recommended that the increases in salary arising from that report should not be paid in any situation where an unauthorised allowance was being paid until the allowance had been withdrawn. Many of these allowances related to posts where the Review Body had not previously set salary rates.
- In Report 43 the Review Body were tasked with examining the responsibilities attaching to posts such as vice president, executive dean and head of college in two universities, DCU and UCC, with a view to determining appropriate remuneration levels for these posts. These posts were being remunerated at the rate of professor plus an allowance to compensate for the additional duties. The Department indicated that they would subsequently set salaries for the other relevant posts in the sector based on the conclusions of the Review Body.

³⁶ Some of the pay rates are linked to general service grades and consequently may be affected by other reports of the Review Body dealing with those grades. Report 40 also resulted in an interim increase of 7.5% being paid to University posts. The Report itself did not specifically cover the higher education sector but sanction was given for the increase to be paid to University posts.

³⁷ The grade of Associate Professor in NUIG has received the same increases as professors generally as a result of a Labour Court Recommendation in 1989. There were about 40 posts of Associate Professor in NUIG at the time Report 42 was published.

Report of the Public Sector Benchmarking Body, June 2002 and December 2007

Posts not covered by the Review Body on higher remuneration in the public sector are dealt with in the main by benchmarking. The benchmarking exercise in 2002 and 2007 set approved salary scales for the main grades including lecturer and associate professor.

National Wage Agreements

Increases agreed under the National Wage agreements between Government and the social partners apply to University posts. The most recent agreements include

- 2000 to 2003 – The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
- 2003 to 2005 – Sustaining Progress
- 2006 to 2015 – Towards 2016.

Annex B Resort to Special Framework

The Universities Act, 1997 provides that a university may depart from the approved levels of remuneration, fees, allowances and expenses where the governing authority is satisfied that it is necessary to meet the objects of the university. This departure may only occur within the terms of a framework agreed between the universities and the HEA.

The framework which has been established stipulates the following conditions

- the Chief Officer confirms that the Governing Authority is satisfied, and so certifies, that there is clear and documented justification that the departure is necessary to meet the objects of the university
- a separate contract is drawn up, the terms of which differ significantly from the terms of appointment of permanent staff and the post is limited to a fixed-term contract appointment not normally exceeding five years
- the post bears a unique title, duties and responsibilities differentiating it from an established post or grade
- the contract includes stated performance objectives for the post holder
- where the departure involves an appointment to a non-academic post requiring professional or technical qualifications and experience, the conditions agreed must be in line with those applying to positions with similar responsibilities and employment conditions in the broader public sector (including commercial state sponsored bodies).

The framework also stipulates that each university will provide six-monthly to the HEA details of, and justifications for, any departures made by it under the framework.

Under the provisions of the agreement any post created as a result of an agreement under the framework is to be 'red circled' and any claims from university employees for improved conditions which are based on, or refer to, agreements made under the framework are required to be opposed on that ground (without prejudice to any other grounds the university may have).

The framework also provided for the establishment of a special (Edmund Burke) professorships in order to enable universities to recruit and retain leading international scholars and researchers by offering them internationally competitive remuneration and conditions. The additional remuneration costs of the appointment were to be funded by the university from private or from Exchequer resources other than University core funding. However, this provision was not invoked.

The recourse to the framework agreement by universities was reviewed in the course of audit and the position in each university is as outlined below.

University College Dublin

As at 31 December 2008, UCD had eleven³⁸ staff appointed under the framework agreement still in employment in the University. The contracts in these cases provided for increases in salary linked to salary increases applying to similar grades specified in the contract or increases in the Consumer Price Index. The details are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Appointments under the Framework at 31 December 2008 – UCD

Post	Salary	Allowance	Potential Performance Bonus ^a	Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration
	€	€	€	€	€
Director of Research Strategy and Planning	177,683	-	26,652	26,652	230,987
Director of Strategic Planning	184,857	-	9,243	36,971	231,071
Director of Executive Education	159,096	-	25,000	23,864	207,960
Vice President for Research	286,783	-	86,035	114,713	487,531
Vice President – Staff	220,757	-	11,038	44,151	275,946
Vice President – Development	167,280	-	25,092	—	192,372
Dean School of Business	251,940	-	12,597	37,791	302,328
Principal of College of Engineering, Maths and Physical Sciences	247,679	-	37,152	49,536	334,367
Conference and Commercial Manager	94,109	-	-	14,116	108,225
Professor of Early Childhood and Development	184,500	-	-	36,900	221,400
Professor of Power Systems	232,000	-	-	34,800	266,800
Total	2,206,684	-	232,809	419,494	2,858,987

Source: Higher Education Authority.

Note a: The potential bonuses payable on 2008 salaries become due in 2009.

€204,921 of potential performance bonuses of €222,454 payable in 2008 in relation to 2007 performances was paid in 2008 to the eight staff to whom the framework applied.

³⁸ The HEA stated that as at 31 December 2008, thirteen appointments had been made in total to UCD under the Framework.

Dublin City University

As at 31 December 2008, DCU had three staff appointed under the framework agreement still in employment in the University. The details are set out in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Appointments under the Framework at 31 December 2008 – DCU

Post	Salary	Allowance	Performance Bonus	Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration
	€	€	€	€	€
Research Professor	194,973	-	-	-	194,973
Research Professor	146,772	33,564	-	-	180,336
Research Professor	146,772	33,564	-	-	180,336
Total	488,517	67,128	-	-	555,645

Source: Higher Education Authority.

University College Cork

As at 31 December 2008, there were four staff appointed under the framework still in employment in UCC. The titles of the posts are outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Appointments under the Framework at 31 December 2008 – UCC

Post	Salary	Allowance	Performance Bonus	Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration
	€	€	€	€	€
Chief Executive Officer of Tyndall NI	224,700	-	-	22,470	247,170
SFI Principal Investigator	127,472	55,769	-	12,747	195,988
Research Professor	158,644	133,323	-	15,864	307,831
Head of College of Medicine and Health	211,353	-	-	-	211,353
Total	722,169	189,092	-	51,081	962,342

Source: University College Cork.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

As at the 31 December 2008, there were three staff appointed under the framework agreement still in employment in NUIM. The details of these are set out in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Appointments under the Framework at 31 December 2008 - NUIM

Title	Status	Salary	Allowance	Performance Bonus	Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration
		€	€	€	€	€
World Class Researcher	Permanent	190,373	-	-	11,535	201,908
World Class Researcher	Permanent	171,058	-	-	-	171,058
World Class Researcher	Fixed-Term Contract	160,000	-	-	-	160,000
Total		521,431			11,535	532,966

Source: Higher Education Authority.

In response to my enquiries as to why the first two Professors were made permanent the President of NUIM informed me that, in relation to the first listed World Class Researcher, UCD had, without any public advertisement, attempted to induce the Professor to work for that university together with other senior staff of the Hamilton Institute which he established and led³⁹. The Institute had generated €3.8 million in research income in 2007/08 and €4.3 million in research income in 2008/09. Retaining the Institute was vital for NUIM both in terms of achieving its own strategic intent and in terms of its creditability as a research led university. Another important factor was the passing of the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003. On renewal of this contract that legislation would have made it very difficult not to give the Professor tenure. In light of that legislation the University did not believe the appointment was in breach of the framework.

The President of NUIM stated that, in relation to the second listed World Class Researcher the professor had applied for and was offered a job advertised by Trinity College. It is the understanding of the university that he was being offered a package higher than that he was receiving at NUIM. In order to retain his services he was given tenure and a non-pensionable allowance equivalent to 13.5% of the top point of the professor scale. The allowance specifically related to this Professor taking over as Head of the then recently established Institute of Immunology. The Institute had earned €1.3 million in research income in 2008/09, up from €800,000 in 2007/08. The University had no income in this important research area at the time of the appointment. NUIM accepted that this is a technical breach of the framework but pointed out that it had always returned details of the Professor concerned to the HEA as required under the framework and that the State has received benefits from NUIM's arrangements.

For these reasons, and in order to protect the Institution, the university offered both professors permanency on their existing terms.

³⁹ There was a degree of media comment on these attempts at poaching in 2006.

National University of Ireland, Galway

As at 31 December 2008, there was one individual appointed under the framework agreement still in employment in NUIG. The details are set out in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Appointments under the Framework at 31 December 2008 - NUIG

Title	Salary	Allowance	Performance Bonus	Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration
	€	€	€	€	€
Professor of Applied Physics	158,644	31,729	-	-	190,373

Source: Higher Education Authority.

Trinity College Dublin

As at 31 December 2008, there were eight staff appointed under the framework agreement still in employment in Trinity College. The details of the framework staff are set out in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Appointments under the Framework - TCD

Post	Salary^a	Allowance^b	Performance Bonus	Pension Contribution^c	Total Remuneration
	€	€	€	€	€
SFI Principal Investigator	120,789	44,545	-	18,118	183,452
SFI Principal Investigator	127,006	35,685	-	19,051	181,742
SFI Principal Investigator	139,435	25,168	-	20,915	185,518
SFI Principal Investigator	139,435	30,895	-	20,915	191,245
SFI Principal Investigator	146,774	123,008	-	14,677	284,459
SFI Principal Investigator ^d	140,000	-	-	14,000	154,000
SFI Principal Investigator ^d	146,774	29,355	-	14,677	190,806
SFI Principal Investigator ^e	161,451	-	-	16,145	177,596
Total	1,121,664	288,656	-	138,498	1,548,818

Notes:

- a Salary levels are as at 31 December 2008.
- b The allowance in each case is funded from the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Grant held by the Principal Investigator, and is as negotiated and agreed between SFI and the Principal Investigator. These allowances are not pensionable.
- c Employer Pension Contribution is charged against applicable scale salary only in line with normal Scheme Employer Contribution rates for members.
- d At 31 December 2008, salary and allowance were funded in full from the SFI Research Grant held by the Principal Investigator.
- e At 31st December 2008, salary to the value of €146,774 was funded from the SFI Research Grant held by the Principal Investigator.

University of Limerick

As at 31 December 2008, there were two staff appointed under the framework agreement still in employment in the University of Limerick. The details of the framework staff are set out in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Appointments under the Framework - University of Limerick

Title	Status	Salary	Allowance	Performance Bonus	Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration
		€	€	€	€	€
SFI MACSI Research Professor	Fixed-Term Contract	158,644	23,796	-	-	182,440
Professor of Software Engineering and Co-Director of LERO	Multi-Annual Professorial Appointment and Fixed-Term Contract ^a	151,605	15,160	-	-	166,765
Total		310,249	38,956	-	-	349,205

Source: University of Limerick.

Note:

- a The Professor of Software Engineering post is remunerated on the basis of the professorial salary scale. An allowance is paid in relation to the co-directorship of LERO which is on a fixed-term contract basis.

Subsequent Alterations

In September 2009, a revised framework was agreed. The main provisions include

- It will only apply to academic and research staff and will not be used for administrative or technical appointments.
- The HEA does not consider it appropriate for the framework to provide for tenured appointments. Therefore, the contract appointment, not normally exceeding five years, may be renewed for one further period of up to five years after which a permanent appointment may be made using scales approved by the Ministers for Education and Science and Finance. Alternatively a university may seek prior approval of the Ministers for a salary outside approved limits.
- The framework will be subject to review after a period of four years or sooner.

Chapter 5

Discretionary Pension Awards

Discretionary Pension Awards

5.1 A practice of adding years for pension purposes to compensate for the inability of certain professional or technical staff to qualify for a full pension based on 40 years service by retirement age is operated in the public service. Situations where individuals would be unable to qualify for full pension arise

- where a minimum number of years experience were required for appointment or
- the minimum entry age specified in a competition was over 25.

Pension Arrangements in University Sector

Up to 2004/2005 five of the universities^a operated funded pension schemes from which members' retirement lump sums and basic pensions are paid. These pensions were supplemented by way of post-retirement increases paid out of current revenue – the bulk of which was funded from the universities' core grants. From 2004/2005, the five universities closed these pension schemes and new appointees to the university from that date became members of newly introduced unfunded schemes which are based on the public sector model scheme.

Dublin City University and the University of Limerick have always operated unfunded pension schemes based on the Department of Finance public sector model scheme.

Under the unfunded pension scheme any pensionable employee that retires can apply for professional added years. Their application is assessed in line with the scheme rules.

Posts advertised prior to 1 April 2005 could be eligible for up to ten added years, however posts advertised after that date have a maximum eligibility of five added years.

Note:

- a Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, National University of Ireland, Galway and National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

5.2 Prior to the introduction of the Universities Act 1997 (the Act), the State did not have a role in approving the pension schemes of Trinity College and NUIM. In the case of NUIG, UCD and UCC, all statutes including those relating to pensions were, under Section 5 of the Universities Act 1908, required to be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas with provision for disallowance by either House within 40 days.

5.3 During the 1970s, the HEA developed a process whereby these institutions submitted draft statutes to the HEA for review. The HEA, in turn, consulted the supervising Departments and subsequently advised the institution of any difficulties with the draft statute. These views were generally taken into account by the institution before finalising the statute and laying it before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The 1997 Act conferred the function of approving university pension schemes on the HEA subject to the consent of the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Finance.

Transfer of Pension Funds

5.4 In April 2008, the Government agreed that the assets and liabilities of the funded schemes should be taken over by the State. This decision was subject to a pre-condition that, pending the finalisation of the legislative provisions for the transfer of the assets to the State, the universities and the trustees/administrators of the funded pension schemes would continue to take all possible action to ease pressures on the pension funds in the intervening period. This was communicated to the universities by the Departments and the HEA.

5.5 In order to give effect to the Government decision in April 2008 the Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was enacted in 2009. This provides for the transfer of certain pension funds (including the pension funds of the five universities) to the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF). The Act states that all discretions in the pension schemes of the five universities which operated funded pension schemes continue in effect after the date of the relevant transfer order but, from that date, the discretions will transfer to the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Finance who will exercise them jointly.

5.6 The Act permits the Ministers to delegate the exercise of a discretion to the HEA or the governing authority of the university concerned. It is planned to discuss the development of a framework that will consider the future exercise and delegation of discretions with the universities. Each of the universities will be considered on an individual basis taking budgetary and other relevant factors into consideration.

5.7 The pension fund assets for Trinity College and NUIM transferred to the NPRF with effect from 31 December 2009. The pension fund assets of UCD, UCC and NUIG transferred to the NPRF with effect from 31 March 2010.

5.8 Under the Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009 following the transfer of the funds the obligation to pay benefits becomes an obligation of the university and where contributions are insufficient to meet benefits, the balance is to be made good out of funds provided by the Oireachtas.

Chapter Focus

This chapter reviews the basis for and the extent of the practice of awarding extra years service as part of the calculation of pension awards in the university sector.

University College Dublin

5.9 Retirement benefits in relation to all staff retiring between October 2007 and September 2008 were reviewed during audit. In a large number of cases substantial extra years were added to the service of the retiree. The results are set out in Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1 Review of Retirements October 2007 - September 2008

Years Added	Number of Staff	Average Salary on Retirement
No years	12	80,706
1 - 5 years	30	81,423
5 -10 years	12	56,961
Total	54	75,828

5.10 78% of staff retiring between October 2007 and September 2008 had years added to their service for pension purposes. These 42 employees had an average of 4.2 years added to their pensionable service and their average salary on retirement was €74,434.

Observations of the University

5.11 UCD outlined the relevant enabling provisions as follows

- The facility to grant added years is derived from specific statutory authority. The Statute had been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas prior to the Universities Act, 1997.
- An extract from a section provided “*For the purpose of computing the pension of any pensionable member of the staff, the Governing Body shall have the power to add to the number of actual years of pensionable service such number of years as the Governing Body in its absolute discretion may think fit, provided also that the foregoing power shall be exercised by the Governing Body only in the case of a staff member whose special qualification and experience prior to joining the College has been recognised by resolution of the Governing Body, provided further that the total number of added years for the purposes of pension, together with the number of actual years of pensionable service, shall not exceed forty. In the exercise of such powers, the Governing Body shall add years only in respect of full-time service prior to joining the staff of the College which was not transferred to the College under Section 18 of Chapter 1 of this Statute, or in respect of which a gratuity or pension or other benefit was not awarded. The number of years added shall not exceed one-third of the actual number of years of full-time service in the College.*”
- The Statute sets out the various categories of staff to whom the added years provision applies.
- The Statute clearly provides that the decision to grant added years is a discretionary power of the Governing Authority. Since the adoption of the Statute in 1997, all decisions to grant added years have been made by means of special resolutions of the Governing Authority. Prior to the relevant Governing Authority meeting at which individual cases are considered, the UCD Finance, Remuneration and Asset Management Committee considers the cases and sends forward recommendations to the Governing Authority. The preparatory work, in terms of calculation of benefits and potential added years, is carried out by the UCD Pensions Office and submitted to UCD Finance, Remuneration and Asset Management Committee.
- The Statute applies to staff who were appointed before 2005. Since that year, the provisions of the public service model pension scheme apply to all appointees and set out a different set of criteria for the granting of added years. In summary, these provisions provide for a more restrictive application of added years and impose an upper limit of five such years. There are also additional rules governing the reduction of added years as a result of pensionable service elsewhere in the public or private sectors.

- The Pensions Office reviews the personnel file of each potential retiree to confirm actual service, transferred in service, purchased service and potential for buy back of previous public sector service and potential for added years. A meeting may take place with the retiree if clarification is required on any issue. The potential for added years is calculated where the member has special qualifications, e.g. a Masters Degree or PhD. and/or experience which has not been pensioned elsewhere.
- The Pensions Office rigorously applies the formula for calculating potential added years. The calculation of potential added years has been administered on this basis since inception of the relevant statute.

University College Cork

5.12 The President of University College Cork outlined the University's practice in awarding added years in the calculation of retirement benefits in terms of eligibility for added years. He stated that academic staff members (appointed to the grade of College Lecturer and above) and certain administrative staff are eligible for professional added years. Staff appointed on all other scales are not eligible⁴⁰ for added years.

5.13 Added years are not granted until retirement and while all benefit statements show a potential amount of added years for the relevant category of staff, the statement confirms that years will not be granted if all the criteria are not met. Any years granted are subject to a charge of 1% of retiring salary per year of service granted. An individual resigning prior to retirement will not be granted added years.

5.14 Under the scheme rules an individual can receive up to ten professional added years at age 65 and this is reduced by one year for every year that an individual retires early so that the maximum number of years that can be granted at age 60 is five added years. The number of years granted is also limited by a stipulation that total service cannot exceed 40 full-time years (for full-time staff) or a lower maximum for an individual with part-time service (i.e. maximum service for a part-time person (50%) is 20 full-time years if the individual was always part-time). In addition, the number of years granted cannot exceed one-third of service (actual and transferred but excluding any purchased service).

5.15 A number of specific requirements/reductions also apply to the granting of added years including the transfer in of all retained benefits, payment of contributions in respect of temporary service and reduction in respect of periods of unpaid leave and part-time service.

5.16 Academic staff appointed prior to 8 July 1986 are eligible by Statute for seven professional added years at age 60. The years are accrued in the first ten years so that in the 11th year a member of the academic staff has gained a right to seven added years at age 60. Where such academics retire at age 65 they are entitled to a maximum of ten added years as with the normal application. However, the maximum abatement for retirement prior to age 65 is three years reduction in added years, as the academic has gained the right to the remaining seven years on reaching age 60. These added years are transferable subject to the total added years transferred not exceeding one quarter of total service. There are a total of 44 active scheme members in this category of staff.

5.17 The application of added years in UCC is statutorily provided for and the granting of added years is at the discretion of a Pensions Committee except where an actual entitlement exists with

⁴⁰ In addition, any staff member appointed on a personal rate is not eligible for the application of added years (research staff, for example, would fall within this category).

statutory staff. The reality in practice is that once individuals fall within the eligible grades and satisfy all criteria they will be awarded added years on retirement.

5.18 Figure 5.2 outlines the number of retirements and added years awards in the years 2006-2009.

Figure 5.2 Retirements and Added Years awards in 2006 to 2009, UCC

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Academic				
Retirees eligible for professional added years	12	21	14	30
Average professional added years awarded	5.29	3.91	5.81	3.63
Non-Academic				
Retirees eligible for professional added years	3	4	5	8
Average Professional added years awarded	6.22	3.77	3.88	2.74

Trinity College Dublin

5.19 Trinity College operates two public sector defined benefit pension schemes

- The College's "Master" Pension Scheme was established on 1 April 1972 and closed to new entrants with effect from 31 January 2005. It has operated heretofore as a funded pension scheme⁴¹.
- The College's "Model" Pension Scheme was established on 1 February 2005 and is currently operating on an administrative basis with Ministerial consent since that date. It is operating on an unfunded pay-as-you-go basis in line with public sector norms.

5.20 The synopsis below provides an overview of the added years provisions under each of these Pension Schemes.

Master Pension Scheme

5.21 This Pension Scheme was established by Trust Deed in 1972. The Scheme Rules provided for under Trust Deeds state that *"there shall be added to such Service for a Member whose retirement is not before age 60 and who has completed at least 5 years' full-time Staff Service 1/3rd of such Service subject to a maximum addition of 10 years."*

5.22 Approximately 55% of pensionable college employees at the last renewal date (October 2009) were members of the Master Pension Scheme.

⁴¹ The assets and liabilities of this Scheme transferred to the NPRF in December 2009 under the Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009.

5.23 The Scheme's added years provisions, as opposed to professional added years schemes that may operate in certain parts of the public sector, are granted to any scheme member meeting the criteria that either remains in service to retirement or dies in service. The added years are not applied if a member resigns from service with preserved benefits. The added years are only calculated on the basis of service completed with the college and are exclusive of any transferred in service that may be accepted into the scheme from other approved organisations under the public sector transfer network or private sector schemes. The added years are capped, if necessary, to ensure total pensionable service never exceeds 40 years of pensionable service.

5.24 While the award of added years is discretionary in nature under the Scheme Rules, this discretionary power has always been exercised in the favour of employees that meet the criteria and remain in service to retirement. On the basis of custom and practice since 1972, it has become a legitimate *de facto* entitlement. In the past, when an employee with prospective short service joined the pension scheme it was the practice of the college, with the agreement of the Trustees, to grant additional years at that stage. On entry to the scheme, therefore, members were advised that they had been granted added years and all documentation, including Annual Benefit Statements received subsequently, have shown member-expected benefit entitlements inclusive of the award of added years.

5.25 The level of added years awarded on retirement is set out in Figures 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Added Years in respect of Retirements, TCD, 2007 to 2009

	2007	2008	2009
Academic			
Number of Retirees	22	21	16
Average Actual Service	31.14	32.60	33.25
Average Added Years	3.42	2.31	1.71
Non-Academic			
Number of Retirees	33	23	37
Average Actual Service	26.97	16.24	26.22
Average Added Years	4.32	3.34	2.72

5.26 The level of added years awarded on death is set out in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 Added years in respect of deaths, TCD, 2007 to 2009

	2007	2008	2009
Academic			
Number of Deaths	-	-	2
Average Potential Service	-	-	25.08
Average Added Years	-	-	8.19
Non-Academic			
Number of Deaths	6	5	6
Average Potential Service	27.81	16.45	27.82
Average Added Years	4.90	5.48	4.83

Model Pension Scheme

5.27 Approximately 45% of pensionable College employees at the last renewal date⁴² were members of the Model Pension Scheme.

5.28 There have been no retirements or death claims processed under the Model Pension Scheme since 1 February 2005. Professional added years for new entrants to the Model Pension Scheme will be in accordance with public sector norms⁴³.

National University of Ireland, Galway

5.29 The statutes of NUIG state that the Governing Authority shall have the power to award years in addition to the actual service of officers in specified senior positions and posts deemed by the Governing Authority to be of a professional, technical or specialist nature and in respect of appointment to which qualifications and or experience ordinarily required would not permit appointment of a person less than 25 years of age.

5.30 In practice, all staff in the grade of administrative officer and above are awarded added years on retirement provided they meet specified conditions. Eligibility is assessed by the Pensions and Investment Officer. The decision to award added years is not sent to the Governing Authority for further approval. The current Pensions and Investment Officer does not have a copy of the specific delegation decision giving authority to award added years.

Observations of the University

5.31 NUIG stated that although the wording of the relevant statute indicates that added years are at the discretion of the Governing Authority, this discretion has always been exercised in line with the provisions of the statute and staff are annually advised of their projected added year's entitlement (impacting their decisions regarding overall pension planning). Consequently, custom and practice and legitimate expectation dictate that added years form part of the terms and conditions of employment. There is in practice, effectively no discretion available to the Governing Authority in respect of existing staff.

5.32 Added years are awarded to members who hold an academic post, a post of administrative officer, sub-librarian or equivalent. Added years range from five at 60 years of age to a maximum of ten years at 65 years of age or as an alternative one-third of actual service.

5.33 NUIG stated that as the award of added years is strictly in line with defined rules, awards are not sent to Governing Authority or others for approval. In line with longstanding custom and practice awards are implemented by the Pension and Investments Office alone. The level of added years awards at NUIG was as set out in Figure 5.5.

⁴² The last renewal date was October 2009.

⁴³ Circular Letter 8/2005, Department of Finance, March 2005.

Figure 5.5 Retirements and Added Years Awards in 2008/2009, NUIG

	Number of Academic Staff	Number of Non- Academic Staff	Total Staff
Retired	17	30	47
Eligible for Professional Added Years	17	1	18
Professional Added Years awarded (Average 3.82 yrs)	12	-	12
Ill Health Added Years awarded (Average 5.55 yrs)	2	3	5

University of Limerick

5.34 The President of University of Limerick stated that it operates a professional added years scheme as approved by the Minister for Finance from time to time. It has a Pensions Committee that adjudicates on applications for added years on retirement as laid down in the rules of the above schemes approved by the Minister for Finance. The award of added years is confined to certain professional, technical and specialist staff in the University and allowed for in the schemes.

5.35 Some retiring staff in the University of Limerick were awarded added years in 2008 and 2009 in line with the above schemes as follows

- in 2008, nine staff were awarded added years ranging from two years to the maximum award of ten years
- in 2009, 22 staff were awarded added years ranging from 3.67 years to the maximum award of ten years.

Dublin City University

5.36 The President of DCU stated that professional added years in DCU are granted in accordance with the Schemes that are in operation and approved by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Finance.

Discretion and Entitlement

5.37 Discussions have taken place between the five universities, the HEA and the Departments of Education and Skills and Finance in relation to the transfer of the pension funds. In the course of discussions issues were raised as to what is the nature of a discretion and what is an entitlement. Advice was sought from the Attorney General on this matter and the response stated that where the exercise of a discretion has, through statements made or commitments given, become a *de facto* entitlement, a variation in that established practice under which staff would suffer an unavoidable loss as a result would be problematic.

5.38 The Accounting Officer stated that where an award of added years remains a discretion, its exercise by the Ministers following the transfer will depend on the level of funding available at the time and the potential cost into the future. Work is underway with each of the universities to identify all sets of circumstances where *de facto* entitlements arise.

Conclusions

Funds totalling €1.4 billion have transferred from university pension funds to the NPRF.

Additional years have become a feature of pension awards in universities. By way of example, in UCD 78% of staff retiring between October 2007 and September 2008 had years added to their service for pension purposes. These 42 employees had an average of 4.2 years added to their pensionable service and their average salary on retirement was €74,434.

Similar provisions apply in other universities – Trinity College stated that since 1972, on the basis of custom and practice the award of added years has become a legitimate *de facto* entitlement under its Master Pension Scheme and that Scheme members were advised that they had been granted added years.

This also arises in universities that operate pay-as-you-go schemes. For instance, in the University of Limerick, nine staff retiring in 2008 were awarded added years ranging from two years to the maximum award of ten years and in 2009, 22 staff were awarded added years ranging from 3.67 years to the maximum award of ten years.

The awarding of professional added years is, in general, confined to situations where, by reason of requirements to be appointed to a post, a person could not have completed 40 years service before retirement age. In such cases, the schemes provide for the awarding of up to ten added years in respect of posts advertised prior to 1 April 2005 and five years in respect of posts advertised on or after 1 April 2005.

Currently, all discretions to award added years which existed prior to the transfer of pension funds to the NPRF continue to exist but they will now be exercised jointly by the Minister and the Minister for Finance, pending the delegation of this function to the HEA.

Although certain awards of added years may be expressed to be discretionary the Attorney General has advised that they may, in fact, have become entitlements through statements made or commitments given to staff.

The Department has indicated that work is underway with each university to identify all sets of circumstances where *de facto* entitlement exists.

Appendices

Appendix A Internal Resource Allocation and Scheduling

This appendix outlines the detailed observations of universities on their procedures for the internal allocation of funds and the scheduling of resources.

University College Dublin

The UCD Resource Allocation Model (RAM) is the mechanism by which funding is allocated internally within the University. Income allocated using the RAM comprises core recurrent grant, other non-capital grants, academic fee income, funded research income, research overhead income and miscellaneous income. Specific grants, fee income, research income and overheads, and miscellaneous income earned by individual academic units are credited directly to the relevant unit. Core recurrent grant income is allocated to academic units in accordance with specified drivers that reflect UCD priorities and uses many of the elements of the HEA's RGAM, although RAM is broader in scope than RGAM.

RAM uses the same relative subject weightings as RGAM. However, RAM attaches a significantly higher weighting (25%) to research drivers compared to the HEA RGAM (5%), reflecting the strategic importance within UCD of incentivising research activity. It is also planned to introduce an Education Incentive Grant which seeks to reward teaching quality and outcomes as well as activity and inputs. RAM also charges academic units for the cost of support services on the basis of a number of usage drivers.

In its course scheduling UCD uses a centralised system to capture all information in relation to the planned curriculum and teaching for each academic session. This includes detailed timetabling information. Classes are timetabled against a university-wide standard timetable framework, which aligns course timetables to allow maximum flexibility and student choice under the UCD Horizons⁴⁴ curriculum. Academic staff are deployed to teach courses and supervise students by their head of school. The University recognises that it is good practice for workloads to be assigned using a workload model, which considers the activity and productivity of each staff member in research, postgraduate supervision, teaching, management and administration and allocates teaching accordingly. These workload models vary from subject area to subject area due to the varying nature of academic work. The UCD Governing Authority has set out principles to guide the implementation of workload models in UCD schools, and all schools have implemented or are piloting the implementation of a workload model. Lecture theatres and classrooms are centrally allocated to maximise efficiency. UCD lecture theatres and classrooms have occupancy rates in excess of 90%, which is above international norms.

University College Cork

The University has developed its own internal resource allocation model which allocates resources in line with university strategy and objectives. It predominantly reflects the RGAM model as applied by the HEA. In a major restructure in October 2005 the University merged seven faculties into four colleges (Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Studies, Business and Law, Medicine and Health, and Science, Engineering and Food Science). The development of the model will be based on this new organisational structure.

⁴⁴ The UCD Horizons programme was launched by UCD in 2005. It is the name given to the structure for undergraduate taught degrees at UCD. The UCD Horizons programme is modular and based on credits. It is more flexible than traditional degree structures and allows the student to individualise their studies.

The model is based on the following three elements – strategy, teaching and research. Each college has discretion as to how the funds allocated to it are distributed to schools, departments, research centres etc. subject to overall policies. This distribution takes account of the strategic plan of the college and includes appropriate incentives, including, for example provision of facilities for interdisciplinary studies.

There are six steps followed in allocating income to the colleges

- Determining the amount of income available for allocation – the three income sources making up the total university income are State core recurrent grant, student fees and other income. In year one of the RAM implementation of these figures was determined by the UCC 2004/2005 HEA funding statement.
- Top-slicing for specific purposes i.e. pensions, strategic development fund, reduction in deficit, minor ear-marked allocations. Strategy is one of the key elements on which the model is based. A percentage of income is top-sliced to provide a fund for strategic purposes. This top-slicing also applies to programmes generating ear-marked income streams i.e. income for nursing, pharmacy, therapies and skills programmes. Initially, 1% of funding is allocated to strategic development increasing to 5% with full implementation of the model. The State grant is adjusted for minor ear-marked allocations (included in the core grant) and the cost of pensions. A top-slice may be necessary for planned/phased reduction in university deficit.
- Allocation of specified income directly to colleges – it has been agreed that the following income sources will be allocated directly to colleges
 - ring-fenced/targeted funding received from e.g. the HEA or the Department of Health and Children
 - student fee income
 - other income outside the State grant i.e. interest receivable, rent, concessions and other charges, funded posts and donations, research grant and project contributions and non-EU fees (excess over Irish fee equivalent).
- Allocation based on teaching and research criteria – formulaic allocations are based primarily on teaching and research related criteria for the State grant. Once the State grant is adjusted for pension, ring-fenced funding, planned/phased reduction in deficit and top-slicing for strategic purposes 70% is allocated for teaching and 30% for research. The allocations for EU undergraduate fee income are based on weighted undergraduate student numbers.
- Allocation of direct costs to colleges – these costs comprise both pay and non-pay costs for academic units. The pay costs relate to teaching, technical and administrative staff. The non-pay costs cover the annual consumables and equipment allocation and recruitment costs.
- Levy infrastructure charge for central service costs – indirect costs comprise the cost of central services in each area and include academic and other services, premises, central administration and services, general educational expenditure, student services and miscellaneous expenditure.

The model was introduced on a phased basis from 2006/2007 as follows

- 10% in year 1
- 25% in year 2
- 100% thereafter.

In relation to course scheduling in UCC, degree programmes specify the modules required to be completed in each year of the programme and often provide students with an element of elective choice to allow for a degree of specialisation within the broader degree. Modules often have pre-or co-requisites.

Teaching is conducted within two 13-week teaching periods (12 weeks formal teaching, 1 week study /review week). Summer examining follows for approximately a 7-8 week period. Autumn examining takes place over a 4 week period at the end of August/early September.

Modules are scheduled within a timetable that allows for students to take the required core modules in their programmes and attempts to maximise the flexibility of electives allowing a broadening of the learning opportunities. Constraints are set by the size of the lecture rooms available and their location, the availability of practical laboratories and smaller seminar rooms etc. The University teaching timetable is managed centrally by an office under buildings and estates and involves close working relationships between the office and timetable coordinators in each school/department. The specific software used to formulate programme timetables is called 'Syllabus Plus'.

Early year timetabling is managed in many areas at a larger-scale college level through timetable committees, particularly in first year when students are more often than not yet assigned to a particular department (e.g. BA, biological sciences, BComm etc). Room allocation to module is based on many factors including matching room size to class size, location in relation to home department/school, distance from previous class for that student group, in-room facilities (e.g. IT and blackout facilities) etc.

The occupancy rate overall of teaching facilities in UCC is high (on average over 80% during teaching terms) and far in excess of benchmarked occupancy rates in comparable institutions in the UK and elsewhere.

Staff are assigned to teaching duties by the head of the academic unit according to their expertise and to ensure work-load balance across all elements of the academics responsibilities and activities (teaching, research, scholarly activities and academic administration). UCC operates on the basis of a minimum of 150 contact hours per year (that includes lectures, practicals, seminars, tutorials, field courses, undergraduate and postgraduate project/research supervision). The average per staff member at UCC far exceeds this (based on a full teaching load analysis of academic staff conducted in 2008/2009).

Trinity College Dublin

Currently, Trinity College uses a single mechanism for budgeting and planning – its Resource Planning Model (RPM).

Allocations are made within the RPM according to agreed student and research weightings with the following elements being top-sliced

- provision of 5% of the State Grant in respect of a Strategic Fund
- state designated ring-fenced funding e.g. Nursing, the Irish School of Ecumenics, Deaf Studies, Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (the Linguistics Institute of Ireland), Medicine (Curriculum Reform), ICT Expert Skills and Minor Works
- pension Supplementation
- other once-off funding and allocations where appropriate.

The internal distribution model allocates the core grant and fees as follows

- 70% of core grant and all EU undergraduate fees are distributed based on weighted student FTE's
- 30% of Core Grant is allocated for research. Currently, the following are the two proxy measures
 - **Research Degrees Awarded:** the weighted number of research graduate degrees in an academic unit, expressed as a proportion of the total weighted number of research graduate degrees awarded in the college (a PhD counts as double that of a research Masters in recognition of the longer time required).
 - **Weighted Competitive Research Expenditure:** the level of research expenditure in an academic unit, expressed as a proportion of total research expenditure in the college (research expenditure in different groups of disciplines is scaled appropriately to reflect differences in the need for and availability of funding).
- Other Student Fees are distributed directly to the school(s) with which the student is associated.
- Premises costs are distributed based on square metres
- Other indirect costs are distributed on staff and student FTEs.

In its course scheduling, Trinity College's policy on teaching requires that all professorial staff teach undergraduate students, and, in particular, first year students.

Trinity College uses a central management information timetabling system to schedule teaching modules. Timetables are established in terms of the programme requirements based on mandatory and optional modules, many of which are typically shared between different student cohorts. Teaching in each module takes the following forms – large group teaching, small group teaching, fieldwork and laboratory work. Each School timetables modules against the availability of students, of the individual staff assigned to teach, and of appropriate teaching venues (e.g. lecture hall, seminar room, laboratory).

National University of Ireland, Galway

The allocation of the University's income is directly linked to the achievement of the priorities and objectives of its strategic plan.

The University's resource allocation model has, for over 30 years, been informed by student numbers, student/staff ratio, student trends and projections, all of which combined to be a proxy for the RGAM long before its advent. The model has, in more recent years, been developed to take account of information available through the RGAM. The University's research programme, its statutory obligations to programmes through Irish and the implementation of its strategic plan requires an internal refinement of the RGAM model to meet the particular priorities of the University.

The impact of the University's resource allocation model is set out in quarterly college reports.

In its course scheduling programme timetables are determined at the appropriate level within the University as follows

- College-wide programmes have timetables determined at college level. These programmes are, in the main, undergraduate programmes, including BA, BSc and BE programmes.

- School-wide programmes have timetables determined at school level. These programmes include undergraduate degree programmes primarily provided by the staff of a particular School. They include programmes in Medicine, Nursing, Therapies, Law and Commerce.
- The timetables of postgraduate taught programmes are, in the main, determined by the Programme Director, in consultation with the Programme Board and with the schools providing staff contributing to the programme.

Deployment of staff to teach specific courses within programmes is done at the school and discipline level with due regard to equity of workload and the matching of staff expertise with the content and material being dealt with in particular programme modules.

Schools and disciplines notify their accommodation requirements, times and class size, to the University's Buildings Office which allocates lecture theatres and rooms from the stock available, utilising an electronic room booking system (iMeeting). The University has recently completed a project under the Strategic Innovation Fund aimed at maximising the use of available lecture theatre and room space.

University of Limerick

In the University of Limerick, annual internal allocations are based on the prior year allocation less any percentage reduction in State Grant funding. Prior to the downturn in economic circumstances, the University budgetary allocation models were closely aligned to the RGAM weightings.

In regard to course scheduling, the model adopted by the University of Limerick to schedule staff is that lectures, laboratories and tutorials are managed centrally, while final year projects, co-operative education, research funding application, postgraduate research supervision, and academic programme management are managed locally by the relevant head of department. The University of Limerick aims to adopt a strategic approach to scheduling with a view to ensuring

- best use of resources
- increased flexibility for all (staff and students)
- improved staff experience (needs, understanding, engagement)
- enhanced student learning experience (choice, needs)
- best pedagogic mix (course design, course delivery, quality of delivery)
- optimised solution in balancing requirements and future proofing.

The allocation of teaching duties to faculty members is primarily undertaken by department heads, who have line managerial responsibility for staff within their departments. The University schedule is, in the main, produced centrally. Central scheduling allows the University to align its human and physical resources in a manner that focuses on achieving economies of scale and avoids unnecessary duplication of effort.

In any one semester approximately 3,500 events are scheduled (i.e. lectures, tutorials, seminars and laboratories). Around 660 teaching staff are scheduled to teach, including full-time, part-time and occasional lecturers.

Rules implemented in producing the central schedule must take into account

- Research commitments of faculty engaged in teaching – one full day for research per week per duration of semester

- Student constraints – the schedule guarantees a clash-free personal timetable for every student with no period longer than four hours without a break during the teaching day, travel time between internal and external venues
- Course complexity – many UL programmes share modules and since a module can be shared by many different programmes this leads to scheduling complexity. For example, a module might be a core requirement for some programmes and be provided as an optional elective for other programmes. Elective bundles exist on most programmes. Co-scheduling of modules adds particular complexity to scheduling but ensures optimised use of available teaching staff.

Dublin City University

DCU has always operated an Internal Resource Allocation Model. The framework for the current model was set in 1999 and has been refined on a number of subsequent occasions. The funds allocated are State grant, student fees (including fees for overseas students) and other income. External research earnings are specific to projects and are not available for general distribution. There is an agreed framework for the allocation of overheads associated with external research earnings.

The internal model follows the RGAM and the same weighting factors as used by the HEA are applied internally.

The main drivers associated with the model are

- Student Credit Registrations (SCRs): A number of credits are assigned to each student which are based on modules taken e.g. a full-time undergraduate is worth 60 credits. These credits are allocated to Schools based on the courses delivered by that school. The modules are weighted in accordance with RGAM. They are then aggregated at faculty level and allocations are then made to faculties.
- Certain funds are top-sliced for strategic initiatives and for general university expenditure.

The model allocates funds to faculties to implement and support the teaching and research strategies. Executive deans are supported in identifying the effects of changes in student numbers and profiles on faculty funds. The effect on the allocation of introducing new activities and courses is identified and supports submissions to validation and accreditation boards.

In relation to course scheduling, DCU stated that responsibility for the deployment of school based academic staff and their alignment with course schedules rests with the head of school⁴⁵. Each year, the head of school is responsible for the generation of a teaching allocation that identifies the academic members of staff who are to be responsible for the delivery of teaching for the coming academic year. Teaching is typically allocated on a module basis. Teaching allocations are submitted to the Faculty Office, together with details of any and all specific accommodation requirements that attach to particular modules in July of each year.

Faculty administrative staff members are responsible for the generation of a timetable in which programme structures (at the modular level) are aligned with class groups and module delivery requirements including contact hours, staffing and accommodation. Faculty administrative staff liaise closely with relevant academic and/or technical members of staff regarding specific module requirements.

⁴⁵ In some instances the teaching allocation may be generated by the school teaching convenor but is approved by the head of school.

While teaching delivery by particular schools may be associated with specific facilities and, therefore, particular buildings (e.g. delivery of chemical sciences laboratory classes and Nursing Skills modules), modules which do not require specialist facilities can be scheduled in any appropriately sized teaching/lecture room across campus that can accommodate the class group concerned.

Each year, the timetable for the previous year is “unscheduled” so that teaching facilities are released and made available for best use by Faculty administrative staff members who are responsible for timetabling. These administrative members of staff liaise closely with each other to ensure the best possible timetabling fit in terms of accommodation and staff and student scheduling.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

The internal model used by NUIM was introduced in 2004 and reflects the RGAM. All funds are allocated through this process. It is a “follow the student” model and is sensitive to underlying movements in weighted student numbers. However, the first call on resources at NUIM is a top-slice of 5% of the core grant to pay rent to its landlord for the stock of building rented in 1997.

In regard to the 5% top-slice for the use of buildings the President of NUIM stated that the University found this allocation basis unfair and inequitable since other universities had their buildings provided for them from State resources. The buildings involved are the 1997 stock of buildings taken over and exclude any discretionary renting of buildings thereafter.

A further small amount is top-sliced to provide resources to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2006-2011. This money has been used as seed capital in new areas since its implementation in 2005.

The model uses the same research weighting as the RGAM but does not follow the subject weighting. NUIM has developed four cognate groups for the purpose of allocation of non-pay resources (Arts – non-lab, Arts lab-based, Language and Science and Engineering).

Weighted student numbers are the key driver and the objective is to resource adequately the teaching departments at NUIM to allow the departments and staff deliver excellent teaching to students and deliver on the other obligations of the university as set out in the Universities Act, 1997, including contributing to research obligations.

Staff numbers also play a major part in the allocation of resources. The allocation of new academic staff is based on the staff/student ratio in the department. New courses and activities also attract additional resources.

NUIM outlined its approach to the creation of posts. For academic posts, the criteria taken into account include

- current and anticipated pressures on departments measured by trend in student numbers and staff/student ratios
- contribution to strategic objectives around expansion of postgraduates and recruitment of international students
- teaching contribution, measured by number of contact hours, balance between undergraduate and postgraduate teaching
- research performance measured by inputs such as level of funding secured through competitive processes, outputs measured by PhD graduation rates and publications per staff member and impact based on bibliometric analysis

- financial sustainability based on income contribution of each department to total costs of maintaining the department.

Similarly, the allocation of posts to the academic support and other service areas of the University is based on consideration of the following factors

- contribution to implementing adjustment strategy for the University
- contribution to efficiency in providing a service
- contribution to quality of student and staff experience
- potential to generate additional income
- compliance requirements.

An important feature of the current model is that resources may also be withdrawn from departments and reallocated when vacancies arise whether through retirements, other departures of permanent staff or termination of contract posts.

In addition to the allocation of resources for new posts the University also allocates small amounts of funds to departments to incentivise recruitment of additional postgraduates and international students, in line with the University Strategic Plan.

The model is centrally managed. Permanent academic posts are awarded to departments based on a weighted staff/students ratio, submissions received from departments seeking additional staff and overall departmental staffing plans addressing teaching breadth, postgraduate supervision and research output.

In relation to course scheduling, NUIM has modularised all programmes and assigned ECTS to each module. Using the flexibility provided by modularisation a wide range of programme types are available for students. Information on the design of programmes and the levels of choice available to students is made available to all students when they register and is also accessible on the web.

The management of teaching schedules operates at two levels.

- At a central level, a timetable is produced on an annual basis which allocates an agreed number of time slots to each module taking account of the particular needs of each discipline. The organisation of the timetable is an outcome of a process of consultation between the registrar and the heads of the academic departments. The Director of Corporate Services who has responsibility for all buildings also contributes to the process by providing updates on the availability of teaching rooms or laboratories of varying sizes, and on the facilities within each room. The allocation of time slots to modules also takes account of the subject combinations selected by students in order to ensure that there are breaks between some lectures.
- Following the allocation of time slots each head assigns the departmental teaching schedule to members of the department taking account of factors such as spreading the schedule over the entire week, avoiding timetable clashes with particular modules provided by other departments, and also facilitating staff to have some blocks of time for research (this may amount to two half days per week). With the current numbers of students, and taking account of the actual numbers of rooms available, there is very little flexibility in the system. Occupancy rates and usage for the principal teaching spaces exceed 80% and the scope for adjustments to the timetable in response to requests from either students or staff is extremely limited. In some cases it has been necessary to hire rooms off-campus for the delivery of modules.

Some departments cater for significant numbers of part-time students who are only available to attend for lectures in the late afternoons, evenings and/or weekends.

Recently, the University has installed an automated timetabling system that will facilitate the exploration of alternative scenarios and assist in identifying solutions that will optimise use of physical resources while also providing some flexibility for staff and students.

Appendix B Teaching Approaches and Organisation

This appendix records the observations of universities on the changes being made in teaching approaches, the effect of those changes on staff-student interaction and the initiatives to improve efficiency.

Teaching Approaches

University College Dublin

UCD, in the period 2004-2008, reported undergoing a major and fundamental curricular reform, with the introduction of modularisation and semesterisation at all levels in the University and a move to facilitate students broadening their undergraduate education by taking modules outside their core subject area, described as the UCD Horizons modular curriculum. The period 2005-2009 saw major changes in doctoral education and training, with the introduction of structured and thematic PhDs, to include a significant taught and skills training component in the PhD and important improvements in supervisory arrangements. These major structural reforms have been accompanied by significant developments in teaching methods and approaches including

- greater use of online supports for teaching and learning through the UCD Blackboard e-learning platform
- increased use of small group teaching and better use of the tutorial system
- increased use of enquiry and problem-based learning
- increased use of continuous assessment
- the introduction of alternative forms of assessment and better alignment of assessment, teaching and learning outcomes.

University College Cork

UCC listed the following developments

- The ongoing work of Ionad Bairre (the UCC Teaching and Learning Centre) and more recently, the National Academy for the Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning⁴⁶ (NAIRTL) funded through SIF over the last five years has led to many positive developments in teaching and learning in UCC.
- Teaching methods that promote and encourage integration of research, teaching and learning from the first term of a student's first year are actively being encouraged at UCC.
- Innovative approaches to curriculum design, delivery and assessment at UCC include the use of learning outcomes, peer assisted learning, problem-based learning, focus on development of graduate competencies and group work.
- Greater use of ICT in teaching is evidenced in the introduction of clickers, wikis, video conferencing and smart boards. Recent years have also seen wider use of lecture recording for flexible delivery of courses.

⁴⁶ The National Academy for the Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning is a SIF funded collaborative project between University College Cork (lead partner), Cork Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Trinity College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology.

- In recent months, UCC has introduced a policy whereby all new postgraduate research supervisors undertake specific training modules before supervising a postgraduate student as the principal supervisor.
- The UCC science shop is an example of another innovative initiative in UCC that seeks to enhance the student experience and provide early exposure to and involvement in research projects. The UCC science shop acts as a link between community/voluntary groups and University students to facilitate the carrying out of scientific research on behalf of community/voluntary groups.
- Learning outcomes have been incorporated into all undergraduate modules in compliance with the Bologna recommendations and the leading guide to learning outcomes⁴⁷ is widely used internationally.
- UCC has implemented 'blackboard' as a teaching and learning support infrastructure. To date it has over 12,000 registered student users and is accessible externally by students.
- A peer-mentoring scheme (Peer Assisted Learning), whereby students help and support other students in their academic work which already existed in the science areas in the University, has been extended across UCC with significant demonstrable improvements in grades, retention and other beneficial results.
- UCC has also established the infrastructure for 'pod-casting' of lectures and many departments/schools are establishing web-based offerings accessible anytime anywhere. UCC is also in the process of fitting out a number of 'smart classrooms' to deliver state-of-the-art distance teaching and learning (to be operational later in 2010).

Trinity College

Trinity College characterised its approach to teaching as research-led. This is particularly evident in Years 3 and 4 of a programme. Students are encouraged to engage in research activity and there is a strong focus on independent learning. Over the past five years, developments in learning technology have been embraced, and staff and students use WebCT, a virtual learning environment tool.

National University of Ireland, Galway

NUIG pointed to a range of initiatives including

- drafting, approval and implementation of the LTA strategy⁴⁸
- implementation of an institutional course management system/ virtual learning environment (blackboard) which provides web-based resources, communication and assessment tools for all modules and courses and on which all students are enrolled
- an increase in the number of distance and 'blended' learning programmes, including those oriented towards professional practice and employed in key industries (e.g. medical devices, IT)
- investment in and uptake of other new technologies including videoconferencing, video-streaming, podcasting, online-deliberation tools, 'electronic voting systems' (for improved in-class discussion and participation), interactive multimedia and virtual worlds

⁴⁷ Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide, published in 2007 through NAIRTL and written by Dr Declan Kennedy of the Department of Education, University College Cork.

⁴⁸ The Learning Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy is the key means of delivering the University's strategic aims for its core business of learning, teaching and assessment. The strategy was revised in November 2009 and places greater emphasis on implementation and on measuring success.

- the use of enquiry and problem based learning and a wide range of strategies which facilitate the shift from teaching to learning
- teaching excellence Awards both local and national
- service learning and civic engagement modules now in every college, in which students work with community groups and non-government organisations in meeting societal and civic needs and are equipped for active citizenship
- significant efforts in ensuring high rates of retention and extending access and flexible modes of study in programme development and delivery
- the complete restructuring of academic units to improve efficiency, communication and management of activities and the embedding of semesterisation and modularisation
- a strong focus on 'learning outcomes' as the driver of teaching and assessment strategies and alignment with the requirements of ECTS, Bologna, and the National Framework of Qualifications
- the provision of new professional training programmes in teaching and learning as well as other aspects of contemporary academic practice and a formal qualifications framework
- the improvement in the technological infrastructure and the provision of modern teaching venues has required significant investment from the institution and external funders (both State and private donations) as is necessary for the development of high quality, internationally recognised graduates.

University of Limerick

The University of Limerick stated that there had been a range of alterations to teaching in the University over the past five years, including small group interactive teaching, learner management systems and increasing use of technology, wider module choice, flexible learning programmes (including part-time and block-release versions of existing full-time programmes), flexible entry routes, adoption of the ECTS, problem-based learning and studio-based learning. It stated that new pedagogic modes of delivery are being developed on a regular basis to enhance teaching methods and student learning.

Dublin City University

DCU list the following initiatives which have enhanced teaching and learning

- e-learning – new e-mail system with greater capacity, extension of Moodle⁴⁹ capabilities and training of staff in its use, ExL website designed to develop fundamental learning skills, availability of exam papers online, enhanced 'off-campus' access to web-based materials and enhanced wireless access
- improvements in administrative tasks at the university for example online registration, electronic submission of research theses, self-issue system in library
- feedback – official post-examination consultation periods and providing feedback through the "Your Voice Heard" website
- changes in the methods of assessment used such as increased use of continuous assessment methods and peer assessment

⁴⁹ MOODLE is a course management system, also known as a learning management system or a virtual learning environment. It is a free web application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites.

- action learning for example the use of practicum in computing and DCU Business School and INTRA placements
- development of learning supports for example library e-tutorial for students, mathematics learning centre, teaching and learning portfolios.

There has been significant alterations in teaching methods over the past five years such as

- blended learning
- problem based learning
- work based learning
- use of portfolios
- focus on learning outcomes.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

At NUIM programmes are being redesigned with greater emphasis on the learning outcomes for students and more classes favour interactive as distinct from directed teaching and learning. Where possible there is a move to smaller classes especially after the first year, though in practice there are many classes with more than 200 students due to timetabling constraints. Extensive use is being made of virtual learning environments, such as MOODLE and the application of new technologies such as Sympodium, podcasting and audience response systems (PPvote). Special supports are provided by staff and tutors to students who have difficulty with mathematics and/or academic writing.

There are also more opportunities for staff to obtain professional training in teaching which are being taken up by increasing numbers of lecturers, tutors and demonstrators. An online training course aimed at part-time lecturers, tutors and demonstrators is currently being developed by NUIM in conjunction with experts from universities in the United Kingdom and the United States. It stated that all of these alterations are aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning which is essential to ensure the University produces graduates that have a pedagogic experience that is second to none.

Staff Student Interaction

There is a risk that new technologies and innovation could act to the detriment of face-to-face contact unless deployed in a complementary fashion. I sought the views of the universities on how this balance is achieved in each institution.

University College Dublin

UCD stated that face-to-face contact, ranging from large lectures to small-group tutorials, is and will remain the core of UCD's teaching programme, as is the case for all leading international universities. Face-to-face teaching is increasingly supplemented by online resources and teaching sessions. These augment rather than replace the face-to-face learning experience. The balance between face-to-face contact, assessment and online learning is managed at the level of the subject area, as the balance between these forms of learning varies from subject to subject. The management of this balance at local level is overseen by the head of school and the dean of the programme, in line with published university norms, which are in turn based on European norms derived from the ECTS and the Bologna process. The approach to teaching and learning, and the mix between different types of teaching and learning support, is a central topic in unit quality reviews, module review and annual programme review, and these quality mechanisms are key drivers of improvement and change in the nature of teaching practice.

University College Cork

UCC stated that there is increasing pressure on universities to incorporate a greater use of technology and innovation into their curriculum, which has resulted in the wide adoption of a blended learning approach. The challenge remains for educators to develop strategies that ensure any novelty effect does not wear off with an end result of technology impeding learning. The balance can be achieved when the use of technology in teaching and the development of new technologies is underpinned by pedagogical theories. It noted, in particular, that

- Modules at UCC are still centered around a lecture programme supported by practical classes, seminars and tutorials and in most cases intranet-based and remote delivery of materials. Face-to-face delivery is an essential part of teaching and learning, supported by the developing new technology. Formal assessment and feedback is also seen as a vital component of learning by students.
- ICT experts, educators and students collaborate to address any issues associated with the greater use of technology in the curriculum. Students must have regular opportunities to influence the curriculum design which should be flexible enough to incorporate change when required. The scholarship of teaching⁵⁰ approach provides students with regular opportunities to give feedback on their own learning and can be an important factor in finding the balance between face-to-face contact, assessment and new methods of delivery.
- UCC science shop projects require face-to-face contact between the student and the research commissioning community group and between the student and the student's supervisor. The innovation, in this regard, rather is in the identification of research topics through a bottom-up approach, recognising broader social issues and needs.

⁵⁰ The scholarship of teaching and learning approach involves systematic research into teaching and learning, critical reflection and dissemination of results.

Trinity College

Trinity College stated that there is a high level of student/staff interaction in the teaching at Trinity College. Lecturers employ modes of teaching that encourage their students to take an enquiry-based approach to learning. Learning technologies increasingly enable interaction between staff and students outside the traditional 'contact hour'. The definition of learning outcomes at programme and module levels, is prompting the review of assessment methods, though the traditional end-of-year examination is likely to continue to feature as one of the least resource-intensive methods of assessment. The balance between face-to-face contact, assessment and new methods of course delivery is achieved through the design and delivery of the programmes. Online teaching does not substitute for small group teaching where face-to-face contact is important. It is important to achieve a balance in the different methods of course delivery and course committees are responsible for ensuring best practice in the delivery and assessment of a course.

National University of Ireland, Galway

NUIG stated that the selection of teaching and learning methods is fundamentally driven by the educational requirements of each subject area, guided by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of professional accreditation, the Quality framework, the National Framework of Qualifications, international subject 'benchmarks' (e.g. as detailed in the Tuning Programme⁵¹) and the external examiner system. In addition, learning outcomes, teaching, and assessment methods must be 'constructively aligned' in order to fully optimise learning and achievement.

It went on to note that, in higher education, the emphasis is, as it should be, on active, engaged learning and the development of critical thinking, transferrable skills and a valuing of the potential for lifelong learning and continuing professional development. The use of the term 'course delivery' is therefore somewhat inappropriate since it fails to acknowledge those aspects which are demanded by the needs of the economy and society. Active learning requires the nurturing of students' metacognition, an appropriate sense of intellectual challenge and a mediated conversation between subject knowledge, academic expertise and student. The provision of formative feedback at every stage of the learning process is essential to overcome the key barriers to understanding faced by novices in any high-level domain and requires adequate staffing levels and a supportive learning environment.

University of Limerick

The University of Limerick noted that the balance between student face-to-face contact, assessment and new methods of course delivery varies depending on the cohort of students and their capacity to undertake independent learning. A number of taught postgraduate programmes have as the primary mode of delivery a blended learning approach. An aim in first year is to significantly increase face-to face contact particularly in the early stage of the semester.

- Learning centres have been established in science, mathematics and writing skills that are based on enhanced face-to-face contact. In turn, these are complemented with online tutorials which are managed through learning support platforms.
- New methods of course delivery are designed to augment face-to-face contact, not replace it. In particular, the adoption of technology is shaped by a concern to support a more diverse student body that reflects a broad range of learning styles. Moreover, increasing student

⁵¹ The Tuning Programme is a programme which seeks to redesign, develop, implement, evaluate and enhance quality in first, second and third cycle degree programmes. The programme started in 2000 as a project to link the objectives of the Bologna process and later the Lisbon Strategy to the higher education sector.

numbers, and a corresponding diminishing staff-student ratio, means that recourse to technology is vital just to maintain existing levels of service provision.

- A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities has been adopted to support the learning experience. Specialist learning centres are one example. Student peer-learning support groups have been established in some faculties.
- Departmental and continuous assessment methods are reviewed on a regular basis. Different modes of assessment continue to be implemented, very often in response to student feedback and/or recommendations of quality review groups.

Dublin City University

DCU stated that some disciplines may require more face-to-face contact than others, e.g. undergraduate nursing requires person-to-person skills and may require more face-to-face content perhaps than a computer undergraduate programme.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

NUIM stated that decisions regarding the most appropriate balance between face-to-face contact, assessment and new methods of course delivery are complex and usually taken at the level of the departments responsible for disciplines, subject to overall guidance provided by policies and procedures approved by the Academic Council. The balance depends on the nature of the discipline. Laboratory or language disciplines typically require small classes with much interaction between the lecturers and the students. In other areas, some knowledge is imparted in a variety of ways to large classes but these typically need to be supported by tutorials or online virtual supports for small groups that also involve the lecturers. In some instances, it has been necessary to subdivide first year classes as the University does not have a lecture theatre with seating capacity for more than 450 students. This of course leads to additional teaching hours that need to be resourced.

NUIM noted that the methods of assessment employed also varied between disciplines and at different stages in programmes, again within an overall framework for assessment agreed by the Academic Council. The traditional predominantly end-of-year terminal examination model had been replaced in all departments by a combination of small assignments throughout the semester some of which may be electronically based, group projects designed to inculcate a wide range of skills and terminal assessments which may vary from traditional examination formats to long essays. The balance is kept under review and departments amend their practices in the light of international advances in pedagogy, the types of learning outcomes that need to be assessed at different stages, the availability of resources and the competing demands for those same resources, and also in response to feedback from external examiners on the most appropriate assessment strategies to assure quality of the educational and learning experience.

Efficiency Initiatives

In response to my enquiries on the extent to which efficiencies were being combined with the innovations outlined in the foregoing section, universities pointed to the following which they stated had impacted positively on efficiency.

University College Dublin

UCD noted that modularisation has in some cases enabled a more efficient and effective deployment of teaching resources by making courses available in a flexible way to a larger number of students, and allows the University to respond to changing student needs in a flexible and efficient manner. However, the fundamental driver for modularisation was to better serve students, to improve the student experience and above all to allow the curriculum to be adapted to the needs of individual students. Modularisation carries significant administrative and academic overhead to manage the curriculum and provide individualised advice and guidance to students, but this overhead brings very significant benefits in student learning. The fundamental resource available to the University to teach students and support their learning is staff. A comparison of student and staff numbers at UCD and a range of UK universities shows that UCD is considerably more efficient than the comparator universities, in that more students are taught, with equivalent outcomes, per staff member.

The President noted that Irish universities have higher ratios of students to staff by comparison internationally and the ratios are increasing. While graduates of international quality and standing are produced, the student experience is undoubtedly impacted by this relative under-resourcing, and in the medium-term quality and effectiveness will suffer. UCD staff-student ratios will worsen in that core staffing will have reduced by 6% between December 2008 and December 2010, and student numbers will increase by more than 10% in that period. He stated that this will significantly affect the quality of learning and services as well as research productivity. He noted that there was little or no scope for further efficiency in that environment.

University College Cork

UCC noted the following changes in teaching methods which have resulted in efficiency gains

- International research has shown that there are many benefits to the embedding of research and enquiry into undergraduate curricula. The learning outcomes approach to curriculum design contributes to a more efficient and effective delivery of the curriculum. This approach helps teachers of all disciplines to decide what they should teach and assess, and helps students to understand what they are expected to learn. It helps teachers to select the appropriate teaching strategy matched to the intended learning outcome, ensuring that appropriate teaching and assessment strategies are being employed. The advantages of the learning outcomes approach transcend course and module design, providing quality assurance due to the increased transparency and comparability of standards between and within qualifications.
- The greater integration of traditional and emerging ICT in teaching provides a more modern and flexible service for students. It enables more students to learn in more ways and has the added benefit of skills development. Effective use of virtual learning environment's, recorded lectures and video conferencing in teaching can save cost and time in the medium to long term. UCC currently has over 12,000 registered users of 'Blackboard'.
- The integration of generic competences into curriculum delivery will reduce the need for one-off courses on skills training and, in addition to enhancing the student experience, this approach will lead to more efficient use of staff time and resources.
- The wider collaboration, communication and dissemination of ideas in relation to teaching methods has led to a more innovative approach to teaching and an enhanced student experience.
- Students involved in UCC science shop projects carry out their research as part of their course requirements, often as their final year projects, which means that additional resources are not drawn upon. The science shop also ensures that research within the University is

more focussed on addressing societal needs and highlights the value and benefits of research as well as its possibilities and limitations.

Trinity College

Trinity College stated that the introduction of modularisation and the allocation of ECTS has introduced greater clarity in curriculum provision and a more balanced workload for students. It reported that it was difficult to see how further efficiencies could be gained without compromising the basic quality of the educational experience, with attendant implications for the value of degree awards and the research activity of the academic staff. It noted, however, that it was in the process of replacing its bespoke student information system and a new system will facilitate the introduction of the core and elective curriculum which will provide greater student choice.

National University of Ireland, Galway

NUIG stated that the advent of modular and semesterised programmes has provided greater flexibility in extending the number of course offerings to students and ensuring that programmes can be rapidly adapted to suit the emerging and developing needs of employers and wider society. A portfolio of modules allows a greater number of potential pathways through programmes at little or no additional cost and this includes widening the opportunities for part-time study and, through full implementation of ECTS, credit accumulation and transfer between institutions both within and beyond Ireland.

The embedding of technologies has enabled new programmes in distance and 'blended' learning modes. This has extended access to courses by students who are either geographically dispersed or unable to attend in full-time, on-campus mode and hence ensure even greater return on the investment in infrastructure and staff training. It stated that under the new PhD fellowship schemes, there is greater participation of postgraduate students in supporting teaching and learning at undergraduate level, allied to a development of transferrable skills and which also helps to link teaching and research missions as well as the nurturing of a more inclusive academic community.

University of Limerick

The University of Limerick stated that the efficiencies obtained from the introduction of new methods is to a significant extent driven by the desire to improve student performance and are crystallised in terms of enhancing student experience and performance. All programmes at the University have been modularised since its foundation in 1972. Module sharing across degree programmes for different student groups, facilitates economies of scale. The consequence is that such modules are co-scheduled so as to optimise teaching capacity. Alterations in teaching methods, and in particular the adoption of new technology, are designed primarily to enhance the student experience by enriching the learning environment rather than to achieve further efficiencies. The importance of face-to-face contact between teachers and students is not diminished by these developments. The University examines module usage and selected routes on programmes on an ongoing basis so as to 'close down', i.e. make unavailable, those not widely selected by student groups.

Dublin City University

Courses at the University have been modularised for some time.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

NUIM noted that precise estimation of the extent of efficiency gains is difficult. New modes of delivery, greater use of modularisation, regular monitoring of student registrations for modules and reviews of examinations/student performance statistics have all contributed to efficiency gains that have resulted in substantial increases in productivity. Between 2005/2006 and 2009/2010 the total number of students at NUIM increased by 22% from 6,519 to 7,945 while over the same period the total number of academic staff declined from 260.5 FTEs to 255.5 FTEs. Thus, over the period the academic staff-student ratio deteriorated from 1:20.7 to 1:28, which is by far the lowest academic staff to students ratio among the seven universities. Despite this the retention and completion rates among undergraduates had improved. Another measure of enhanced efficiency and productivity is the increase of 50%, to almost 1,800, in the number of postgraduates that are taught and supervised, and the increase from 51 in 2005/2006 to 76 in 2008/2009 in the number of PhD graduations.

Appendix C Observations of the Irish Universities Association and the Universities on the Institutional Quality Reviews

I sought the views of the IUA in relation to the sectoral response to the institutional reviews conducted in 2004/2005. Its response is set out below.

Mission and Strategy of Universities

The IUA outlined key developments across the universities in response to the recommendations made by the Review Team in relation to the development of the mission and strategy of universities. The developments included

- continued strengthening of the strategic planning process with new institutional strategic plans being published in 2010
- use of the Strategic Innovation Fund to explore and develop a variety of inter-institutional collaborative mechanisms
- the development of strategic partnerships in key areas – such as the TCD-UCD Innovation Alliance spanning all areas of Research and Development processes, collaborative research platforms such as the Molecular Medicine Ireland initiative and initiatives such as joint procurement
- a realignment of internationalisation activities within the universities.

Teaching and Learning

In relation to teaching and learning, the IUA stated that universities had

- fully rolled out ECTS and modularisation across Irish universities
- made ongoing efforts across all universities to develop and promote a “learning outcomes” approach, in line with the Bologna Process and good international practice
- conducted additional developmental work since 2005 at the UCD Centre for Teaching and Learning, as well as at similar centres in other universities
- increased inter-institutional collaboration through bodies such as the National Academy for the Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) and the Dublin Regional HE Alliance, in furthering good practice and the sharing of resources.

Research

The IUA noted that research in the universities in recent years has been significantly driven by the publication of the Government’s Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI) which itself reflected many of the issues highlighted in the reviews. Some key developments highlighted by the IUA include

- a continuing strengthening of focus in institutions’ research strategy accelerated by the competitive, internationally peer reviewed research funding system
- a significant increase in PhD graduations as part of the national goal to double PhD numbers
- the implementation of a new approach to graduate education involving structured PhDs and specific skills development

- monitoring of universities research performance through the use of bibliometric tools to measure research output and impact
- acceleration of commercialisation outputs in the form of patents, licences and spinouts through the development of the university technology transfer offices.

Governance

The IUA noted that the most significant development in the area of governance was the development of a Code of Governance drawn up jointly by the IUA and the HEA in 2007.

In relation to structures it notes that universities have continued to review and adapt the composition of their governing authorities within the statutory constraints applying. As part of the development of graduate education, significant responsibility has now been given to the Deans of Graduate Affairs in the development of PhD education and graduate education generally.

Resource Allocation

The IAU noted that these recommendations have been substantially implemented through the implementation of RGAM and the complementary internal resource allocation models now employed by the universities.

Quality Improvement

In response to the comment of the Review Team regarding the implementation of the recommendations at faculty and university level, the IUA stated that recommendations at that level had significant additional resource implications and as a result it was less likely that it would be possible to implement them.

The following developments to address recommendations in the area of quality improvements were identified by the IUA

- the IUA and the IUQB in 2007 have published the revised “Framework for Quality in Irish Universities”
- good Practice Guidelines have addressed weaknesses identified in the institutional reviews. These included guides covering strategic planning for academic units, institutional research, the organisation of student support services, and the organisation of PhD programmes
- a set of joint principles has been covering student involvement in quality assurance/quality enhancement, follow-through on quality improvements and the provision of education to international students.

Coordination

The IUA stated that the creation of clearer reporting lines for the quality office and linking these to other important strategic enablers has resulted in better management information for senior institutional management, and better feedback mechanisms for institutional governance. In addition, significant restructuring has taken place in each university both in terms of academic structures and in terms of administration and management structures. As part of this, information from the quality review process is being brought together with other evidence such as that from institutional research offices to ensure these feed into the strategy development and change processes.

University College Dublin

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for UCD in February 2005. The main recommendations together with the response of the university are set out beneath.

Mission of the University

When formulating the new strategic plan, consider carefully how to position UCD for its specific role in Ireland, e.g. taking into consideration the disciplinary balance of the university, the type of higher education to be provided, and shifting the balance from undergraduate to postgraduate, adult and international education.

UCD Strategic Plan 2005-2008 set out clear objectives which UCD has achieved in terms of strategic focus to developments in student recruitment; development of research capacity; internationalisation and lifelong learning. The UCD Strategic Plan (2005-2008) delivered radical reform of UCD's undergraduate curriculum, establishing the modular, semesterised and credit-based UCD Horizons curriculum; establishment of Graduate Schools and structured PhD programmes to support fourth level training; launch of a new research strategy and support system with a particular focus on the development of large thematic multidisciplinary research programmes; complete overhaul of academic recruitment, development and promotions systems; formulation of a new campus development plan.

The draft UCD Strategic Plan (2010-2014), commits the intellectual resources of UCD to the rebirth of economic prosperity in Ireland as a priority area in the context of national and global crisis, possibly the most challenging circumstances of UCD's history. Excellence in teaching and research and focus on innovation to build on achievements in teaching and research are the pillars on which the strategy is formed. Traditional educational concerns will be supplemented by the development of entrepreneurial capacities amongst students. In moving forward the new Strategic Plan places greater emphasis on the national impact of UCD activities.

The establishment of the Innovation Alliance in partnership with Trinity College Dublin is a key element of UCD's aspirations on innovation. This will lead to unprecedented collaboration with Government and industry and is intended to be part of the national recovery programme towards developing the 'Smart Economy'. Internationalisation will be progressed by welcoming international students and staff; being a resource for diaspora abroad and by playing a leading role in developing Ireland's relationships with Asia, particularly China, with the UCD Confucius Institute, established in 2006 being a ready-made channel to enhance key relationships. Priority research themes have been identified up to 2014 – these include Earth Sciences; Energy and the Environment; Global Ireland; Health and Healthcare Delivery and Information, Computation and Communications. These will enhance current research activity and build interdisciplinary all-Ireland and international collaboration.

Notwithstanding the University's focus on keeping UCD finances on a solid footing, UCD intends to make strategic investments and to seek Government and private support for priority developments to enhance and transform its provision in support of national recovery. UCD strategic planning processes are continuous, self-correcting and informed by a community of stakeholders.

Teaching and Learning

Increase the capacity of the Centre for Teaching and Learning in its existing core functions and also in developing a more important research component, to enable UCD to identify and build on best practice.

The scope and capacity of the Centre for Teaching and Learning has expanded since 2005. The Centre came under the overall line-management of the Deputy Registrar Teaching and Learning in 2008. In 2009, the Centre was redeveloped as part of a wider UCD Teaching and Learning under the Deputy Registrar. While evidence on teaching and learning in higher education will inform practice and developments, the focus will be on building capacity for enhanced teaching and learning within UCD Schools in line with UCD's Education Strategy. A new Director of Teaching and Learning was appointed in 2009, in addition to a Teaching Projects Support Team. UCD Fellowships and Senior Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development have been incorporated into UCD Teaching and Learning from 2009.

Use the recent experience from a number of academic units in undertaking comprehensive curricula reviews and introducing new teaching and learning approaches to foster such activities on a wider basis across the university.

Module enhancement projects were completed in 2008/2009 in which almost 900 modules were reviewed at School level within the Colleges of Arts/Celtic Studies and Human Sciences and at Programme level in the College of Business and Law. An assessment project, focusing on ensuring alignment of assessment with learning outcomes within the major programmes in the UCD College of Life Sciences was undertaken in 2008/2009. The UCD College of Engineering, Mathematical and Physical Sciences will engage in a similar initiative in 2009/2010. A UCD grant scheme to support module innovation, design and delivery of general education modules and teaching/research links in curriculum design has been introduced. A suite of annual awards and grants schemes has been developed to enhance and encourage individual academic teaching performance and innovation.

Encourage a renewed focus on the outcomes of the learning process, not just on the teaching inputs, across all units.

The modularisation process developed in UCD involves a clear articulation of learning outcomes for each module and the modular assessment strategies to measure these outcomes. This module information is placed online prior to student registration and is reviewed annually.

Ensure that the modular structure and ECTS⁵² are introduced rapidly and coherently across the entire university.

⁵² The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives preferably specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be acquired. ECTS was introduced in 1989, within the framework of Erasmus, now part of the Socrates programme.

Modular structure and ECTS have been fully implemented across the University. Module reviews have taken place and learning outcomes are being redeveloped.

Implement a common approach across the institution for the student evaluation of courses.

A project on the use of a common approach to student evaluation of modules is at implementation stage for academic year 2010-2011.

Research

Articulate UCD's policies regarding research more clearly and develop a coherent research management system.

Research management systems have been implemented – work is ongoing to continually enhance these. The UCD research management processes; research and research policies all provide optimum support for UCD's research.

Increase the number of research students and fellows.

The number of PhD students rose by 26% since 2005. Funded research posts have risen by 67% from December 2005 to December 2009.

Encourage better cooperation with the dynamic Irish and international industrial activity in the immediate hinterland of UCD.

UCD drew attention to the following developments in relation to the implementation of this recommendation

- Links with industry are focused on strategic alliances rather than just geographic considerations.
- Two Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Centres for Science Engineering and Technology were awarded - Systems Biology and CLARITY.
- A number of strategic research clusters are in place.
- Proposals have been developed for five competence centres which would be industry-led.
- Industry partnership programmes are in place.
- UCD Nova has links with 45 companies including 15 campus companies.
- More than €200 million industry investment has been attracted into UCD.
- The Technology Transfer Unit in UCD Nova has been developed with a current staffing level of six.
- IRCSET awards provide for an industry-funded PhD programme.
- 40% of SFI funding is in industry-linked areas.

Link the monitoring and evaluation initiatives for the new research institutes to the university-wide Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process.

The nature and role of research institutes have been clarified, as have structures and processes for management and governance of the institutes. Major research institutes were reviewed in 2006 and recommendations are being implemented. UCD major research institutes now come within UCD Quality Assurance procedures in the current cycle of Quality Reviews at UCD. Guidelines for Quality Review of Research Institutes within UCD quality assurance are being developed and the first periodic Quality Review of a research institute is scheduled for 2011-2012.

Governance

Explore options for adapting both the size and composition of the Governing Authority, in order to provide the university with more suitable strategic direction and oversight.

The UCD Code of Governance was published in 2007, which draws on the HEA/IUA *Code of Governance for Universities*. The number of members of the Governing Authority has been reduced to 40 and there are now just two permanent committees of the Governing Authority – the Finance, Remuneration and Asset Management Committee and Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Ensure an effective and functional Academic Council in order to provide an effective and timely academic governance counterbalance to the executive management team.

The Academic Council Committee structures were reviewed in 2008 and new Committees of Academic Council have been constituted. A review of Academic Council membership will be completed in 2010.

Use the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process and results, together with an increased institutional research capacity, to support strategic planning and actions.

A Director of Institutional Research has been appointed. Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement is explicitly linked to planning process. Analyses of Quality Review recommendations are being routinely undertaken and work on building pathways for results of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes to inform planning.

Entrust greater responsibility to the deans for a variety of academic and management issues including Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement across each faculty.

College Principals (formerly Faculty Deans) are now budget holders for their Colleges and are directly involved in Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement procedures, e.g. appointment of Review Group members for associated Schools and participation in review of Quality Improvement Plans following School Reviews.

Use both input and output measures when developing a new resource allocation model.

Progress is being made on including output measures. Currently, 25% of grant allocation is for Research incentives with two measures defined. Measures for Teaching and Learning are being developed.

Monitor student and other mobility not only in terms of incoming persons but also UCD students and staff going abroad for periods of study or work.

The International Office has advanced these issues

- Information on inward and outward Erasmus exchange rates has improved. Detailed data on balances in reciprocal mobility for each exchange programme, School and College is now available and updated annually.
- Work is underway to achieve reliable data monitoring. Undergraduate student mobility should be achieved within next year.
- In June 2009, UCD signed up to a pilot study, led by the University of British Columbia, to formalise undergraduate research mobility within Universitas 21. This scheme is currently being rolled out.
- Quality of data on non-Erasmus mobility has improved significantly. Full lists of outgoing and incoming students are now compiled annually. Regular meetings now take place between the International Office and other UCD sections with responsibility for administering exchange programmes which have led to processes being implemented for increased sharing of data between units.
- Capture of data on graduate mobility via formal exchange agreements has been achieved alongside that for undergraduate mobility. Further measures are needed to fully capture data on informal research mobility, which by its nature is less easily measured at an institutional level.
- Details on all visiting staff should be submitted to the UCD University Committee for Academic Appointments, Tenure and Promotions. The International Office is developing a proposal to access information on incoming visiting international staff so as to capitalise on their presence on campus for international relations objectives.
- Information and procedures for non-programme student mobility have considerably improved, e.g. for students undertaking voluntary service overseas, the UCD Volunteers Association has recently agreed to share their comprehensive database of programme participants with the International Office. The International Office will explore ways that this data can be incorporated into its reporting on international mobility.
- The International Office is working with the UCD Medical School to promote the recording of data on student clinical placements abroad as part of their programmes – however, this involves work with individual hospitals and presents data protection issues.

Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

Examine the potential for linking the Quality Assurance Office, the Strategic Planning Office and the Centre for Teaching and Learning as the nucleus of a much-needed increased capacity in institutional research, providing essential research support for the executive management.

With the appointment of new Directors of Quality Office, UCD Teaching and Learning and Institutional Research, these units are developing their links with each other.

Examine options for giving faculties and deans greater ownership of the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process, including influencing the choice of peers, and greater responsibility for the follow up and implementation phases.

College principals (formerly faculty deans) have responsibility to review and sign-off Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) progress reports. Further involvement of college principals in Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes is currently under review.

Connect the reviews of departments to a framework for evaluating faculties, so that a departmental review can feed into the faculty review.

Guidelines for quality reviews of colleges are being developed and will include the college's relations with its component schools and academic centres as a core element of review process. College principals are now asked to review QIPs prepared by their associated Schools and are invited to participate in progress reviews of QIPs after one year.

Urgently consider options for developing a greatly improved internal data information system, and use it to feed the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process.

With the appointment of Director of Institutional Research, internal data issues are being addressed. A suite of reports on student data is available to units undergoing review and the Director of Institutional Research provides additional support as required.

Consider options for making the regular quality review process shorter and lighter, i.e. every five years, with a less onerous information gathering process (relying on an improved information system), with a much greater focus on analytical rather than descriptive material.

Quality review procedures have been streamlined to reduce the demands on units undergoing review. Although data will be required to support the self-assessment report, the guidelines emphasise analyses of key data and issues rather than volumes of descriptive data. Quality review procedures remain under review.

Establish links between the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process and the many other Quality Assurance mechanisms which exist at UCD, and ensure academic and support staff are aware of these in their daily work.

Periodic quality reviews bring together ‘evidence’ from various Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement mechanisms. The UCD Guidelines for Academic Unit Quality Review make explicit reference to the interconnectivity between a range of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes (e.g. staff/student committees; external examiner reports). The UCD Quality Office works to address Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement issues with colleagues from associated units, e.g. work on student modules evaluation with the Centre for Teaching and Learning and Academic Development and Director of Institutional Research; Student Forum Day with College VP for Teaching and Learning and UCD Students Union to elicit student feedback. Regular communication mechanisms are used for promulgating details of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement at UCD.

Ensure reviews of academic units also cover that unit’s use of relevant services, such as the library.

Quality review guidelines now specifically include reference to units addressing their relationships with other units. In some cases, review groups have requested to meet with library staff and staff from other relevant units.

Ensure that regular analysis is made of the results of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement activities in order to obtain an overall view of developments.

The University now undertakes analysis of the results of its Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement activities and feeds back findings to the Governing Authority; the Academic Council Committee on Quality and the SMT (Executive).

Ensure that the results of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement activities are fed into the wider institutional decision making processes.

Findings from the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement reports are periodically circulated to appropriate institutional management to inform decision-making processes e.g. issues arising in regard to estates or personnel matters are circulated to UCD Buildings and Services and UCD Human Resources, as appropriate.

To ensure an independent view, it might be useful to involve a wider group of external peers, not necessarily persons already known to the unit leaders.

External members of review groups, although nominated by heads of units, are selected by the Quality Office and are not necessarily known to heads. Guidelines are explicit about conflicts of interest that exclude nominees. Guidelines for selection of Review Group members remain under continual review and have recently been changed to include the principle that the number of UCD members will not exceed the number of external members.

Take steps to ensure that the student body becomes progressively more aware of the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process and contributes to this.

The UCD Quality Office has information sheets for students on its website, with information about UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes and how students can become involved. The

UCD Quality Office has participated in information sessions with student representatives. In January 2010 the UCD Quality Office initiated a process of structured student feedback by holding a student forum day in conjunction with UCD College of Arts and Celtic Studies and the UCD Student Union to elicit student feedback on a range of issues impacting on the student experience.

Develop a performance management system for individual staff members and articulate this closely with the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement framework.

The Performance Management Development System (PMDS) has been fully rolled out in UCD. Mandatory PMDS training was delivered to all staff and the first review cycle is complete.

Explore options for synergies between professional accreditation procedures and the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process.

The Quality Office facilitates units to link Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes with professional accreditation wherever possible. The School of Medicine and Medical Science is developing a QIP that responds to both professional accreditation and its own Quality Review.

Consider introducing a specially adapted quality review capacity to respond on an ad hoc basis to specific unit needs at moments in time.

A number of ad-hoc requests for review processes outside of the formalised UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement procedures have been responded to by the UCD Quality Office.

Consider introducing a specially adapted quality review capacity to review university-wide issues, not units.

A proposal for undertaking Thematic Reviews within UCD has been accepted by the SMT (Executive). A pilot Thematic Review will be undertaken in 2010-2011. Planning has commenced for this.

University College Cork

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for UCC in February 2005. The main recommendations together with the response of the University are set out beneath.

General Recommendations

Link the three central processes underway at UCC – strategic planning, restructuring and Quality Review – in order to ensure greater coherence and better understanding of these across the university.

The three central processes are linked in UCC. The formal strategic planning process in place in UCC was revised following the EUA institutional quality review in 2004/2005 and the links of the three processes were strengthened further. The Governing Body established a committee charged with overseeing the development of a new strategic plan for the university for 2009-2012. The outcomes of the quality reviews conducted to date in UCC were a central focus in the development of the new plan and continue to be in the implementations of the strategic objectives described in the plan. The University Management Team oversees the implementation and the delivery of the approved projects through the Operational Plan. The Director of the Quality Promotion Unit and the Director of Planning in UCC are both *ex officio* members of the University Management Team. The Quality Promotion Committee, appointed by the Governing Body to ensure the University's quality assurance activities and reviews are implemented and monitored and chaired by the President of UCC, reports quarterly to the University Management Team and annually to the Governing Body, thus ensuring close linkage with the activities of strategic planning and quality review. The University Management Team considers in particular the recommendations arising from quality reviews which are addressed to the University and determines actions to be taken. A significant portion of the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and the Operational Plan associated with it have been shaped by the outcomes of quality reviews.

The academic restructuring of the University is completed and the new college structures are in place and operational. There has been significant restructuring of the academic units within the colleges and this has been informed by the outcomes of quality reviews and recommendations of reviewers.

Focus the main thrust of the quality review process at cognate groups of Departments e.g. Faculties or Schools, in order to obtain more structured outputs.

Under the Universities Act, 1997 there is a requirement that the University reviews departments and faculties, as well as the institution. The University conducts reviews of academic departments and programmes, as well as of academic support and administrative units, research centres, faculties and the institution. Interdisciplinary programmes are delivered by groups of cognate academic departments and these programmes are reviewed separately to reviews of academic departments, as well as forming a part of academic departmental reviews. This has facilitated the further development of interdisciplinary programmes.

Reviews of faculties were deferred from the first cycle of reviews because of the academic re-structuring that was taking place in UCC at that time. Reviews of colleges are scheduled to take place in the second cycle. A review of the College of Medicine and Health took place in November 2009 and the other three colleges are all scheduled for review in the next three years. The re-structuring process has resulted in different groupings of departments and units being formed into schools and these are being reviewed during the second cycle of quality reviews. Some have already been completed⁵³.

⁵³ School of Food and Nutritional Sciences; School of Pharmacy; School of Clinical Therapies.

The University has just completed a thematic review of the quality of research activity across all academic units and research centres and institutes (totalling 65) of the University. This was a very significant undertaking, aimed at achieving an assessment of the quality and level of research activity in UCC and involving 113 reviewers from international institutions around the world. The outcomes of the review are informing strategic planning and will assist in decisions as to future areas of specialisations in UCC. This will enhance the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and learning.

Include more external reviewers on the peer review groups and remove all links between the Department under review and the choice of peer reviewers, involve Faculties and Schools more actively in this.

The university reviewed the quality review process on completion of cycle one (2006) and has approved a revised procedure for the number and selection of all peer reviewers, thus implementing the recommendation of the reviewers. The Governing Body approved a revision to the membership of the Peer Review Groups at its meeting of 6 June 2006, incorporating additional external membership and the involvement of the heads of faculty/college. The exact number of peer reviewers will be determined as appropriate for the particular quality review, but all peer review groups should, as far as is practicable and useful, contain the following positions

- external non-Irish university cognate (e.g. Head of Department, senior member of staff)
- external Irish university cognate
- external stakeholder representative (typically employer, representative of professional body, student, etc.)
- internal reviewer (relatively high-ranking, e.g. Dean, Head, Chair of Department)
- internal Rapporteur
- additional external members as needed to ensure comprehensive coverage of all entities to be reviewed.

The composition was revised to ensure that there is now a majority of external reviewers on all peer review panels. The chair of the group is appointed by the group itself, normally from among the external members. The procedure for selection and appointment of reviewers was amended so that the nomination and decisions concerning the reviewers do not involve the unit. Internal reviewers are nominated by the Quality Promotion Committee. Regarding the appointment of external reviewers, the Head of the Unit and Head of the College/Vice President/Head of Function agree on an external expert to be sent to the Quality Promotion Unit. The expert is then approached for recommendations for a shortlist of potential reviewers. Consultation takes place with the unit concerned prior to finalisation of the Peer Review Group in regard to any potential conflicts of interest. Additional names may also be suggested by the Quality Promotion Committee and/or the Director of the Quality Promotion Unit. Final approval of appointment is by the Quality Promotion Committee.

Formulate an overview from results of the quality review process and use this as a strategic tool for the development of priorities and the allocation of both human and financial resources.

This form of specific synthesis is made every year in UCC at the level of the Quality Promotion Committee (QPC) and presented to the Governing Body as part of the Annual Report of the QPC. This synthesis has been a core element in the strategic planning process recently completed. The Director of Quality Promotion Unit prepared a synthesis of the outcomes of quality reviews conducted over the past eight years for the University Management Team. The University Management Team used this overview as a core document in the development of the revised Strategic Plan 2009-2012. Consideration has been

given to the most appropriate mechanisms for linking the allocation of resources to the outcomes of quality reviews.

Ensure discussion in the Governing Body of the strategic vision of the future of the university, and for this vision to be expressed in terms of priorities.

This was a core element of the development of the new strategic plan and the re-structuring that has been implemented. As a consequence of the discussions, priorities were agreed by the Governing Body. The Governing Body continues to receive regular reports from the University Management Team on the progress in delivery of the strategic objectives detailed in the plan. The Governing Body also considers reports on the achievements of the University against key performance indicators and on the delivery of the projects and priorities agreed in the University Operational Plan.

Develop interdisciplinarity to strengthen research competences and to attract students to interesting new areas of study.

UCC is one of Ireland's leading research institutions and is seeking to further establish itself in the research arena, both nationally and internationally. The University's strategy has been to establish a number of research institutes that has enabled UCC to enhance interdisciplinarity in the research environment. For example, the Environmental Research Institute involves research staff from Zoology, Ecology and Plant Science, Geology, Geography, Chemistry, Law, Civil and Environmental Engineering and Energy Engineering, Microbiology, Biochemistry, and Pharmacology amongst others. The Tyndall National Institute houses cross-disciplinary themes involving Nano and Microelectronics, Electrical and Energy Engineering, Physics, Chemistry, Applied Mathematics and Biosciences. The Bioscience Research Institute includes cross-disciplinary research linking biological, biomedical, nutritional and medical sciences and incorporates the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, an SFI-funded CSET which has research activity linking food and health. UCC has also been extremely successful in the HEA PRTLTI competitions for research funding in which interdisciplinarity within and collaboration between institutions is a key criterion. UCC also prides itself in research-industry linkages as exemplified by the recent award to the Tyndall National Institute of the world's leading research institute for industrial interaction.

The University is conscious of the challenges in funding interdisciplinary undergraduate programmes that span across traditional budgetary units. This funding issue has been highlighted in the ongoing discussions on academic restructuring and this is being addressed within the review of the UCC resource allocation model (RAM). UCC has also developed and approved a policy for the governance and management of interdisciplinary programmes to ensure appropriate support and resources are allocated to such programmes. The policy and associated modifications to funding allocations will provide for the allocation of resources (financial and physical) directly to interdisciplinary programmes. A large number of successful interdisciplinary programmes have emerged in the past number of years, several of which have their own individual CAO entry streams e.g.. BA Early Childhood Studies, BA Drama and Theatre Studies, BEd Sports Studies, Commerce/Law with Languages, BSc Genetics, BSc Biomedical Sciences and BSc Environmental Sciences. These programmes have attracted excellent students from outside the traditional catchment area for the University. The recently established Joint Centre for Architectural Education between UCC and Cork Institute of Technology exemplifies the interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaborative approach adopted by UCC.

The formation of Schools within UCC, for example the School of Life Sciences, the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Scoil Léinn na Gaeilge, Biology, Environment and Earth Sciences etc. will greatly enhance the capacity for development of interdisciplinary programmes.

The recommendations of the Research Quality Review Panels have included reference to areas where interdisciplinarity can be enhanced and these are being actively considered in UCC currently.

Develop internationalisation and use it as a lever for change.

UCC is one of the leading universities in Ireland in relation to the percentage of non-EU students it attracts, and has more than doubled the student enrolment and almost trebled the non-EU fee income over the past five or so years. Part of this strategic development has involved the establishment of joint degrees with international universities in countries such as China and Africa. The university is currently revising its undergraduate curriculum, with a view to facilitate increases in the transfer of UCC students to universities abroad and the attraction of overseas students during their studies for a primary degree.

The University is a very active participant in programmes such as the Socrates and Erasmus programmes and in the Framework Programme. These programmes involve significant collaborations with European universities, especially at the postgraduate and research levels. UCC has the highest success rate in Ireland in attracting the Marie Curie Fellowships. UCC will work constantly towards improving this performance overall, including a particular focus on staff/student mobility.

Seek out and develop more strategic alliances with other Irish institutions and networks.

Much has been achieved in this area in the past five years and dramatic changes have occurred. UCC is actively pursuing this agenda and has a number of strategic alliances with other universities in Ireland already in place. The following is a list of some of the most striking achievements of the university in this area

- Perhaps the most significant initiative in terms of strategic alliances in Ireland has been the PRTLII. UCC has been one of the two most successful participants in the programme to date. The programme encourages the development of strategic alliances both within Ireland and abroad.
- SFI is a major player in the funding of internationally reviewed research in Ireland. UCC has been successful in attracting 25% of the funds allocated to date from the total funding of €646 million which is available between 2000-2006. SFI provides grants for researchers from around the world and based in Ireland, for outstanding research visitors, for conferences and symposia, and for collaboration with industry. SFI chooses award recipients in the fields underpinning biotechnology and information and communications technology through merit review by distinguished scientists.
- Another recent example of UCC's success in developing strategic alliances with institutions abroad is the agreement between UCC and Shanghai University to establish a Confucius Institute in UCC, linked to the university's Institute of Chinese Studies. Further expansion of Asian language teaching and research has led to the establishment of an Institute of Korean Studies, supported by Ajou University in South Korea.
- UCC has extensive collaborative links with Cork Institute of Technology, and was singled out in the government-commissioned review of higher education in Ireland by the OECD as the only university in Ireland with links to an institution outside the university sector in Ireland. A number of joint degrees have been developed, including BSc Biomedical Sciences, MSc in Biomedical Sciences and BArch and MArch as well as the establishment of the Joint Centre for Architectural Education. The two institutions have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further develop the interactions.
- The University is part of the AUA (Atlantic University Alliance), which is a strategic alliance of the University of Limerick, the NUIG and UCC.

- The National Access Programme is designed to support and facilitate collaboration between ICT hardware research throughout Ireland at postgraduate level. UCC's Tyndall National Institute plays a core part in this.
- In a number of research areas, UCC is a partner in Socrates and Erasmus programmes and has received significant EU funding towards many interdisciplinary programmes and inter-institutional networks.
- Strong partnerships have been developed with universities and colleges in the USA in relation to Junior Year Abroad initiatives and strategic partnerships in the area of Irish is developing with the University of Montana.

It is the intention of the University to continue the progress that has been made in this area of activity to date.

Put in place a fully integrated management information system, and use it as a basis for strategic management and change.

The University is implementing Agresso for financial management and upgrading its current HR system. In addition, it is developing a Data Warehouse, funded through the HEA SIF programme, which will provide financial, student and staff data to enable greater integration of management information.

Examine further potential and more coherent uses of IT across UCC for the benefit of staff and students, especially for access to documentation.

There have been very significant improvements in IT facilities and its uses in UCC over the past five years.

The availability of access to PCs and the use of the internet to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in UCC has been most noteworthy and significant. Presently, UCC has over 5,000 desktop and laptop computers. The following advancements have been made

- The number of open-access PCs has increased from 250 to 720, with an additional 602 in centres dedicated to particular departments. Some departments also maintain their own computer systems such as BIS, Computer Science, Engineering, Chemistry, bringing the total number of student machines on campus to around 2,500.
- The development of the wireless network across UCC has been implemented.
- The Blackboard VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) was implemented in 2002 and now hosts over 6,904 modules, 4,096 of which have students enrolled, with 1,908 staff enrolled and approximately 20,087 students (including part-time students, adult education students, postgraduates as well as external accounts, external examiners, etc). Based on a recent student survey, it is used frequently (i.e. at least a few times a week) by 83%. UCC Blackboard now plays a significant role in many programmes, both on campus and distance learning for the delivery of content and for communication between lecturers and students.
- To-date UCC Blackboard has been used for content delivery and communications, including student feedback. To complete the development of this virtual learning environment the University is moving towards incorporating online assessment and student management into the system bringing other technologies and tools that have been implemented under the UCC Blackboard umbrella. This will provide a managed learning environment.
- The provision of laptops to students in some faculties, with the intention to extend this programme in the future to more students.

- All Government of Ireland scholars are given a laptop for their use.
- The acquisition and use of twelve mobile classroom units.

UCC will continue to work to improve the facilities available to both students and staff in this area.

Make special efforts to ensure postgraduate students, especially doctoral students, have opportunities to join collective and transversal structures and teams across the university, and thus to become the researchers and faculty members of the future which UCC and Ireland will need.

A report on conditions and facilities for postgraduate students was presented to the Governing Body in late 2004. The Governing Body endorsed the report and the recommendations for improvement and significant work has taken place towards implementing the recommendations contained in the report.

The University has also undertaken very significant policy and infrastructural developments to support and enhance postgraduate education and research under the strategic priority of fourth level Ireland. Over the last five years, there has been a significant increase in postgraduate student numbers, a doubling of PhD students and a major enhancement of taught postgraduate programme offerings. Management initiatives including the establishment of a Graduate Studies Office, a Dean of Graduate Studies and Graduate Schools have been introduced. The range of activities includes

- generic modules for postgraduate training, applicable to many disciplines, with UCC leading nationally in this provision
- structured PhD programmes
- practitioner Doctorates
- establishment of a research forum which integrates researchers, postgraduates, research staff and academics, from all disciplines
- major policies to support, manage and govern the emerging fourth level developments in UCC.

UCC, in partnership with the other universities in Ireland and working with the Irish Universities Quality Board, participated in a cross-sectoral project in 2003/2004. The outcome of the project has been the publication of a set of guidelines for the organisation and conduct of PhD programmes in universities in Ireland, entitled “*Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities.*” The guidelines have been implemented in UCC.

UCC has appointed a Dean of Graduate Studies, reporting to the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic, to lead the development of strategies for graduate education at UCC, implementing national targets such as introducing training to research degrees, developing inter-institutional graduate programmes, establishing graduate schools and increasing PhD numbers. He works with staff, students and administrative offices throughout UCC to develop graduate education, and has also established strong national and international links.

Trinity College Dublin

General Recommendations

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for TCD in November 2004. The main recommendations together with the response of the University are set out beneath.

The EUA Review Team recognised that Trinity College's plan for reorganisation has incentives for economic improvement as well as new possibilities for the academics. All academics need the maximum information about these possibilities and about structural issues related to the reorganisation process. The change process has to assist academics and staff in asking how balance among major disciplinary areas, e.g., science and humanities, is going to be maintained, and how priorities can be established taking into account the varying research funding potential of different areas. Discussion of how these matters are to be resolved should be encouraged and the identity of disciplines and interdisciplinarity supported. Information provision and discussion at all levels should be encouraged concerning the new Academic Resource Allocation Model (ARAM) and new structures.

Trinity College commenced a restructuring programme in the academic year 2005/2006. By the end of the academic year 2007/2008 the following major changes were implemented

- the introduction of the ARAM
- the amalgamation of 64 academic departments into 24 Schools
- the amalgamation of six faculties into three faculties with Executive Deans
- reorganisation of central management
- restructuring of the committees structures.

It has taken time for the new structures to become embedded, but there has been increased inter-disciplinary activity and new developments across teaching (undergraduate and postgraduate) and research.

A review of the ARAM highlighted several difficulties with applying a retrospective allocation model, and the University is now in the pilot phase of implementing a Resource Planning Model which provides academic units greater scope to plan and implement strategic objectives.

The new allocation model can only function if a data management system functions as a support system to the model. There is a great challenge to manage the restructuring process and the simultaneous introduction of the ARAM model. In the developing process of the ARAM model, careful attention has to be given to the selection and weighting of criteria. Although the ARAM model for future distribution of resources probably will give great attention to current differences among disciplines, departments and faculties regarding research and teaching, there are also varying costs of teaching by subjects, which has to be taken into account. Overall, these innovations should be in concordance with the mission statement for 2003-2008 and help to shape the strategic direction of Trinity College during the period.

Trinity College operated the ARAM from 2003/2004 to 2007/2008 which was based on historical data. From 2007/2008, the university moved to a forward-looking resource allocation system called the Resource Planning Model which is based on college estimates for forthcoming years which it then measures against actual outcomes.

The objectives of the move to a forward-facing model are to

- allow a single mechanism for budgeting and planning
- provide academic units with provisional budgets in April/May for the forthcoming academic year
- allow multi-annual planning subject to quarterly monitoring of target achievements, with annual revision of the strategic plans of each academic unit
- allow informed coordinated strategic planning at faculty and college level
- introduce stability into financial mechanisms
- realise the incentives which resource planning is designed to achieve.

The first pilot outcomes of the Resource Planning Model were due to be released in February 2009 for the 2009/2010 financial year with 2010/2011 outcomes scheduled for release in April/May 2010.

The introduction of ARAM corresponded with the introduction of the RGAM managed by the HEA. As such subject weightings were fixed by the HEA (based largely on the UK subject weightings), the reduction in core grant and the absence of a unit of resource have made it extremely difficult to apply ARAM.

This review was structured to accord with the respective responsibilities of the universities and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) concerning quality assurance under the Irish Universities Act, 1997. In terms of teaching, the Review Team observed that the evaluation of courses was not mandatory in Trinity College. Therefore, the Review Team strongly recommended that systematic evaluations of all courses be introduced immediately. However, these evaluations should be kept confidential. Students should be informed of actions taken as a result of the evaluations, even if this form of feedback has to overcome some practical problems, e.g., to find the group of students who made the evaluation. If this is impossible, one alternative is to inform the new course group of students and tell them about actions taken due to the evaluation. The deans and department heads have the responsibility for follow-up of course evaluations. In the evaluation of courses many different models can be used and national or international institutions that have experience with this form of evaluation can be consulted. The role of the Quality Unit is supportive in relation to course evaluations.

In April 2009, the University Council approved the recommendation to introduce mandatory online student evaluation of undergraduate and postgraduate course modules as an additional method of course evaluation. Following an investigation into the different options available, a report to Council recommended implementing online student evaluation effective from September 2010. Currently student evaluation of course modules is conducted through paper-based surveys, focus group, students' involvement on course committees, academic committees of the University Council, and on Council. The Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate and Postgraduate) is responsible for following up on course evaluation outcomes, and the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning supports teaching staff in their professional development. Course committees evaluate quality through several means, including external examiners' assessment, and student evaluation outcomes.

Most of the departments the Review Team met have gone through the first round of the Quality Audits. For the most part these experiences seem to have been positive, especially the work related to the Self-Review document. Colleagues worked on issues related to teaching and the development of academic activities and experienced satisfaction of working for a joint purpose. The visits of the Quality Audit were in most cases appreciated. The report from the Quality Audit was appreciated in some cases but a disappointment in many cases. Suggestions given of new positions were not realised due to lack of resources. Recommendations at the department level have been executed, but recommendations related to the faculty and college levels are not yet accomplished.

Trinity College stated that it values the opportunity that the external quality review process offers. In particular, it values the process of self-assessment and reflection which together with the objective opinions on the quality of our academic and administrative activities assist the University in addressing internal and external demands and opportunities. Trinity College has a rigorous selection process of reviewers in place, and select only those reviewers with high international standing in their field. It does not select Irish-based reviewers, and makes every effort to benefit from other European educational experience.

A working group is currently assessing the effectiveness of the review process in assisting schools and college achieve the optimum benefit from the process.

The Review Team strongly recommends that the Guidelines for External Reviewers Undertaking Administrative Departmental Reviews emphasise that recommendations made by External Reviewers should be sensitive to resource constraints. The 18-month report should be submitted to the University Council and the academic officers for review. The time schedules of quality reviews should be extended to seven years with the provision that a shorter term might be required in some instances.

Following extensive academic restructuring, 64 departments were amalgamated into 24 Schools. Schools are now the academic unit which undergo review. The second round of reviews commenced in 2006. The review process now includes an implementation plan based on the recommendations of the reviewers. The implementation plan sets out how the school and/or college will implement the recommendations and provides information on why, if applicable, a recommendation cannot be implemented. Schools provide a progress report to Council one year after Council has approved the School Implementation Plan. External reviewers are briefed on the Irish funding context. The schedule of reviews has been, as recommended by the EUA, extended to seven years.

National University of Ireland, Galway

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for NUIG in November 2004. The main recommendations together with the response of the University are set out beneath.

Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges

NUIG should develop advocacy strategies for the support of tertiary education in Ireland as well as every possible means to assure the implementation of the HEA's plan, dated 8 September 2004, the Review and Prioritisation of Capital Projects in the Higher Education Sector.

NUIG, through its membership of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and through its own efforts, continuously promotes the development of university education in Ireland in all its dimensions. The President assumes a particular responsibility in this area but it is seen as part of the responsibilities of all senior staff in the University. The University has a proactive capital projects programme, funding for which is pursued from public and private sources and the implementation of which is the particular responsibility of the Vice President for capital projects. Galway University Foundation has been successful in securing private funds towards the University's capital programme.

The review of the internal organisational structure must continue melding smaller units into larger ones.

The University's academic organisation has been fully restructured. Five colleges, each managed by a dean, have replaced seven faculties, and are the primary units of academic organisation, planning and management. 16 schools, each managed by a head, have replaced 55 Departments as the core academic units within the Colleges.

The review of the size, role and structure of the Governing Authority as well as the Academic Council must continue in spite of their regulation in the Universities Act of 1997 which have to be questioned.

The composition of the Governing Authority is in compliance with the Universities Act, 1997. An independent chair of Governing Authority has been appointed and Governing Authority Committees have been restructured and significantly reduced in number. The emphasis is on a small number of key committees, with independent chairs.

The functions and composition of the Academic Council is in accordance with the Universities Act, 1997. The Council has a Standing Committee, which discharges and recommends to the Council in areas designated by the Council. In addition, the Council of Deans, chaired by the Registrar and Deputy-President and including, in addition to the Deans of College, the Vice President for Research and the Dean of Graduate Studies, has responsibility for

- coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the general academic policy of the University in accordance with the University's Strategic and Academic Plans and the decisions of Academic Council
- promoting inter college co-operation
- considering and advising on such matters as may be referred by the President, Registrar and Deputy-President, Academic Council, Standing Committee of Academic Council, Academic Planning and Resource Committee or other University body.

It is recommended that a formal Council of Deans be established, with a clear statement of roles and authority for both the Council and the individual deans.

This has been completed.

In terms of the institutional resource allocation system, its rationale, its priorities, and its criteria, there is a great need for more transparency for faculties and departments.

This process has been greatly facilitated by the introduction of the RGAM by the HEA as the basis for resource allocation to the universities. Internally this has been mirrored by the development of a divisional reporting model which allocates all income and expenditure to schools and colleges.

In terms of internationalisation, it is recommended that the University broaden its concept from just recruiting overseas students to developing international and European understandings and opportunities.

The University, in the context of its Strategic Plan 2009-2014 has developed, under the aegis of the Council of Deans, a comprehensive International Policy document, the implementation of which is the particular responsibility of the International Committee, chaired by the Registrar and Deputy-President, comprised of Vice-Deans with responsibility in this area from each of the Colleges, and supported by the Office for International Affairs.

In order to serve a growing student body, it is recommended that NUIG establish an institutional research office with thorough planning for role and function, so that the vital data is collected and analysed.

An Institutional Research Officer was appointed in January 2007. An additional research assistant was appointed in 2008.

It is recommended that NUIG address the contradiction between its aspiration of being a student-centred university and the students' complaints about large classes, too little space, too few computers and too few student services.

The University's building programme, under which extensive new facilities have been added for the School of Business and Economics, School of Nursing (including a new library), School of Health Sciences, and the School of Political Science and Sociology, the introduction and development of teaching and learning technologies, enhanced computer services, including the introduction of wireless and increased use by the students of lap-tops, the appointment of a Vice President for the Student Experience, the opening of a new purpose-built sports centre and a newly renovated student centre all contribute towards an enhancement of the student experience.

A new engineering school is under construction, and new buildings for the human biology disciplines, psychology, a number of the social sciences and the medical school are at planning stage.

In terms of teaching, the Review Team observed that the evaluation of courses was not mandatory at NUIG. Therefore, it is recommended that systematic evaluations of all courses be introduced immediately. However, these evaluations must be kept confidential. The deans and department heads should assume the responsibility for the follow-up of course evaluations. Students should be informed of actions taken as a result of the evaluations, e.g. inform the new Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities course group of comments from the former students and tell them about department actions taken as a result of the former evaluation.

In June 2005, Academic Council adopted this as official policy. The following additional activities are complete or under development

- formative system for peer observation/feedback on teaching
- protocols about confidentiality and accessibility of student feedback data collected at programme and School levels.
- audit to ascertain extent of active academic unit, programme and course feedback systems
- summative System for Assessment of Quality of Candidates for Promotion
- formal complaints procedure for students receiving low standard services.

The Blackboard Learning System is used extensively to support teaching and learning on mainstream and blended learning programmes. It is also used as a means of obtaining feedback on teaching and learning using its inbuilt online survey tool. Standard questionnaires for end of module or mid-semester evaluations are available and can be customised to suit the requirements of particular courses.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy explicitly addresses the issue of feedback and evaluation with a number of specific action items. This requires schools to have in place frameworks for the systematic evaluation of all courses which they offer, and recommends a range of feedback methods which can be used. In addition to standard feedback questionnaires individual academic staff also make use of the 'Grouped Student Evaluation' scheme and peer observation of teaching. Student feedback results are incorporated within individual teaching portfolios which academic staff are required to submit on application for promotion, teaching awards and as part of the PgCert in Teaching and Learning in higher education.

The Review Team strongly recommends that the Guidelines for the Quality Assurance procedures should emphasise that recommendations presented by the Quality Audit should be sensitive to resource constraints (NUIG, 2004).

This has been completed.

To avoid "review fatigue" and reduce the review burden, it is recommended that when possible the University combine Quality Audits with Accreditation processes.

This is already current policy.

It is recommended to extend the time schedules of quality audits to seven years with the provision that a shorter term might be required in some instances.

General practice is to continue with five-year reviews but allow more flexibility to units for deferrals.

By way of general comment the quality review team noted that the academics' experiences of Quality Assurance procedures and Accreditation processes seem to be predominantly positive, especially the work related to the Self Assessment Report. Colleagues worked on issues related to teaching and the development of academic activities and experienced satisfaction of working for a joint purpose. The visits of the Quality Audit and accreditation groups were appreciated. The recommendations from the Quality Audits were appreciated in some cases but a disappointment in many cases. Injunctions on the department level were executed, but injunctions related to faculty and University level were not accomplished in most cases. The timelines for follow-ups should be more specific.

The University's experience of the first round of Quality Reviews was that they, not infrequently, contained recommendations for the provision of additional resources, especially staff, to the units under review. The recommendations were made separate to the University's own procedures for the assessment and allocation of resources and, perhaps, resulted in undue expectation and disappointment when the University's priorities, within the context of available funding, did not accord with the recommendations of the Quality Reviews.

The Quality Review reports are now better integrated into the structure of the University, with the reports on academic units being considered by the Academic Planning and Resource Committee and those on support service units by the Support Services Committee (up to now reports on support service units have been considered by the Standing and Policy Committee). In addition, the Quality Review follow-up meetings ensure that follow-up actions are explicitly agreed by all parties so that there are no misunderstandings as to agreed actions.

University of Limerick

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for UL in November 2004. The main recommendations together with the response of the university are set out beneath.

Quality Review Process

Establish a schedule for all remaining department and unit reviews for the next three years.

The University has put in place a schedule for the next seven years. This schedule will complete the first cycle of reviews of academic departments, carry out second cycle reviews of a number of academic departments, and complete the first cycle of reviews of support departments.

Ensure that the regular student evaluation of teaching becomes an integral part of the university's system for monitoring quality.

Regular student evaluation is in place. The University is exploring ways in which the linkages between the evaluation of modules, programmes and academic departments may be further strengthened.

Ensure that there is a quick and visible response from the university leadership immediately following an external review.

Following a review, a department incorporates its responses into the Peer Review Group Report and the head of department makes a presentation to the Management Committee followed by discussion. In addition, the Peer Review Group Report is considered by the Governing Authority's Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee and reported on to the Governing Authority prior to its publication.

Secure more precise terms of reference for the peer review teams, in order to avoid unrealistic recommendations.

The University resists over-constraining the Peer Review Group. The briefing to the Peer Review Group has now been extended to include discussion of constraints applying at University level. The Peer Review Group is asked to identify problems where resource deficiencies are a significant contributor, particularly where benchmarking against other similar departments overseas indicates that under-funding is a problem.

Examine options available for undertaking reviews not just of units but of programmes.

The Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) is presently preparing a programme review document and the seven universities are represented in this process. It is anticipated that this will provide a template for programme review throughout the University sector. Separately, many of the programmes at UL are systematically reviewed by the department and/or course board and some by external accreditation agencies.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area (ESG) requires programme review mechanisms. However, the University already has well established

departmental review mechanisms which work very effectively. The challenge facing the University is achieving a balance between the accreditation process reviews and departmental quality reviews. A pilot programme review system has been devised which utilises existing exit surveys, external examiner reports, student focus groups and teaching staff feedback feed into a periodic external review process. This system is currently undergoing trials by the Quality Support Unit in the context of ESG compliance.

Explore what synergies could be achieved between the quality review process and professional accreditation processes in selected areas.

The quality review process currently focuses very successfully on the department while professional accreditation generally focuses on taught programmes. The IUQB review contains a balance between disciplines that are professionally accredited, for example, Health Sciences and Engineering and those that are not, for example, Arts.

Quality Improvement

Ensure clear understanding about the responsibilities for follow-up and quality improvement after evaluations.

Academic departments are now required to submit their Quality Improvement Action Plans to the Management Committee and a system for annual progress reporting is integrated with the established annual reporting cycle.

Create greater flexibility in resource allocation to provide positive stimuli for change.

The University is committed to the introduction of greater flexibility in resource allocation. The model for allocation of faculty posts is currently under review. The University's new Strategic Plan proposes a move towards a system of devolved budgetary responsibility so as to enable rapid response to new needs and initiatives.

Merge several of the current small funds into a reduced number of larger funds, in order to reduce effort in applying to multiple schemes, and link the use of these funds more explicitly to the implementation of university strategy.

Action was taken in merging the University's Strategic Initiative Fund and the Quality Improvement Fund up until 2007. Since then funding constraints have overtaken events with the result that neither Fund has operated in the past two years. However, the University is fully cognisant of the significance of the EUA recommendation.

Create more explicit links between the various human resource and investment initiatives and the outcomes of the quality review process.

There are a number of processes in place to integrate the outcomes of quality reviews into resource allocation (investment) and staff development. These include the annual recruitment (resource allocation) process and the performance management system (Performance Development Review System) and leadership training for managers. Through these processes clear linkages exist between quality reviews and the allocation of resources through the resource planning process. The performance management

system allows the outcomes of the quality review process to translate into work objectives which is also used to identify individual development needs which in turn informs the Human Resources Staff Development Plans.

Move from an optional system of formative teaching evaluation to one where this is accepted as standard practice for all teaching staff.

A majority of faculty are now regularly involved in the process. Additionally, the revised Faculty Promotions Scheme has created a stronger link between promotion decisions and teaching evaluations.

Governance and Management

Ensure that the Academic Council can contribute to the development of the next Strategic Plan and that the Governing Authority are consulted when the draft strategic plan is ready.

A draft Strategic Plan is presently being prepared. As an aid in the development of the plan, consultation has been held with Faculties and Support Divisions, the UL Students' Union, UL Alumni Association, the Partnership Committee and the UNITE Trade Union. When the draft plan is approved by the Executive Committee, it will be the subject of consideration by the Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee whose report on the draft plan will be submitted to the Governing Authority. A further round of consultations with faculties, divisions and the Academic Council will follow. A final version of the Strategic Plan will then be submitted to the Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Governing Authority for approval in 2010.

Improve the status of student class representatives and their involvement in quality management.

The University acknowledges the importance of class representatives both as important avenues of communication and as sources of advice on University issues. They already play a role in selection of students to meet Peer Review Groups. The University is working to support and strengthen the class representatives system and exploring means by which their status can be enhanced.

Examine options for these class representatives to serve on course boards also.

The University recognises the need for Course Boards to be constituted according to a common framework and to conduct their affairs according to consistent guidelines. The inclusion of class representatives on Course Boards will be strengthened.

Allow for increased flexibility in creating variations within courses, including a simplification of the overall number and variety of courses on offer at UL.

UL has made moves in the suggested direction. A number of courses were reviewed involving an examination of their economic viability and rationalisation of structures. Significant steps have been taken towards devising flexible general entry programmes (e.g. Science choice and Engineering choice) to maximise student choice. The ECTS provides further potential in this regard.

Put in place a specially tailored management information system to meet the wide strategic needs of the university.

Systems already exist in Student Records, Finance, Research and Human Resources. The integration of these systems into a single management information system is on-going.

Dublin City University

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for DCU in February 2005. The main recommendations together with the response of the university are set out beneath.

Mission of the University

Given DCU's recent rapid development and the growth in its range of activities, use the next strategic planning phase to develop an explicit mission statement, outlining succinctly what the university is trying to do.

DCU launched a strategic plan – Leadership through Foresight 2006-2008, shortly after the conclusion of the 2004-2005 review which contains a mission and vision section with clear statements on strategic intent, core activity, methodology and distinctive values.

As part of DCU's ongoing development and also in response to the changing nature and needs of Irish society, broaden the student profile further to include greater numbers of postgraduate, international, non-traditional and mature students.

The numbers of postgraduate students⁵⁴ have increased dramatically over the last five years from 2,454 in 2004/2005 to 3,119 in 2009/2010.

Teaching and Learning

Implement fully the ongoing modularisation of all study programmes at DCU.

DCU is well advanced in the full modularisation of all study programmes through its Academic Framework for Innovation which was highlighted by the Peer Review Group as a very significant and well-managed process.

Put in place a more reliable and vigorous student feedback system, so that the quality of all courses and modules is monitored and that this is used systematically to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

DCU has in place a number of complementary student feedback systems, from Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys to Exit Surveys, complemented by an external examiner report template introduced in

⁵⁴ Student numbers in 2004/2005-2008/2009 are based on registered students on 1st March in each academic year. Student numbers in 2009/2010 are based on students registered on 1st November 2009. Student numbers for the Linked Colleges are not included.

2008/2009 and an annual programme review with the aim of continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. A feedback site under the name ‘Your Voice Heard’ has been put into place which informs students of changes made as a result of their input through surveys, reviews and other means.

Re-examine the relationship between teaching and learning in DCU’s programmes, so that this fits well with the desired learning outcomes of each programme.

The Academic Framework for Innovation is entirely orientated towards learning outcomes. All programmes are defined in terms of outcomes, and modules are orientated towards programme outcomes.

Explore available options for implementing a robust system of performance appraisal, capable of assessing, rewarding and sanctioning staff teaching performance.

The University’s recruitment and promotion structures are based on contributions to excellence in teaching and learning, research and scholarship and university service.

A Performance Management and Development Scheme has been introduced. It is designed to improve performance, enhance quality and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Research

Build up more postgraduate research-based programmes, in line with DCU’s own strategic priorities.

In PRTL Cycle IV DCU received support for several national programmes including therapeutics, biophotonics and imaging, photonics and nanotechnology, humanities and social science which all involved DCU research centres and provided essential support for the formation of structured PhD programmes exploiting internal and national collaborations. The investments built on the success of previous SFI and Research Council supported projects. DCU’s extremely high success in PRTL Cycle IV was a clear recognition of the quality and competitiveness of its research programmes.

Examine possible strategies for developing more systematic research links with DCU’s extensive network of industrial and other partners.

DCU has a number of close co-operation links with industrial and other partners including NUIG, the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Inverness Medical, Analog Devices, Becton Dickinson, Hospira and Enfer in the diagnostics research area and UCD, Intel, Stratium and Lexas in the plasma processing research area.

Quality Assurance

Strengthen the explicit links between the various forms of quality assurance at DCU, as part of the university’s ongoing development of a quality culture.

DCU instanced the following which serve to strengthen links between the various forms of quality assurance – the AFI process, annual programme reviews, a unified template including electronic submission of external examiners reports, integration of these elements into the internal review templates,

the introduction of university-wide thematic reviews, as well as central implementation, processing and analysis of surveys through the Internal Research and Analysis Office.

Align the quality review process with the university's strategic processes.

Alignment, in the sense of synchronisation, is difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons. Alignment in terms of content is achieved through integrating alignment with the university strategy and faculty strategies in the internal review templates.

INVENT should systematically inform the quality review process of relevant Schools concerning research commercialisation, IPR, and related matters.

INVENT does inform the quality review process of relevant schools. DCU also internally reviews its Research Centres. INVENT input is an essential element of such research centre reviews.

Adopt a flexible approach when putting together peer review teams, in order to ensure that the collective expertise matches DCU's strategic needs.

A flexible approach is being taken, specifically in pioneering and innovative reviews introduced by DCU, such as university-wide thematic and faculty reviews, which require different peer review group compositions than traditional reviews.

Ensure that the length of time allocated to the self-assessment phase is kept as short as usefully possible. The same applies in preparing the official university response to the peer review group's report.

The timelines have been tightened to the greatest possible extent. DCU's timelines for internal reviews closely mirror those developed for external review processes.

Apply strict limits of 25-30 pages, excluding annexes, to the length of self-evaluation reports.

Self-assessment reports are limited to a maximum of 30 pages for traditional single unit reviews. For overarching or combined reviews a degree of flexibility regarding the length of the self-assessment report has to be retained.

Make more systematic and effective use of the university's database. This will also help reduce the length of time needed to compile reports.

Systematic collaboration between the Director of Quality and the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer in the framework of the Eolas Advisory Group (consisting of the two offices mentioned and the Health and Safety, Equality, Disability and Freedom of Information Officers) is making effective use of the university's database. Efforts to improve the database itself rely on the availability of funding for a unified and all-encompassing Management Information System.

Reduce the overall length of the quality review cycle to match that of the strategic planning cycle. Six years is too long. Extra reviews can comfortably be fitted in each year to make this possible.

The quality review cycle has been adapted to include faculty-based reviews with integrated school reviews; this has also shortened the review cycle for academic units.

Use relevant reports from the first round of quality review as good background documents for the second round, to ensure that this builds on the previous outcomes.

All academic units (excepting some research centres) and administrative and support units have been reviewed in DCU. The second cycle of reviews commenced in 2007 with the Business School. All repeat reviews are based on previous review outcomes.

Identify university-wide issues for review which could contribute to the ongoing development of quality at DCU.

University-wide issues have been identified and two reviews have been successfully completed (First year and Beginners' Student Experience and Postgraduate Student Experience). These reviews were the first of their kind in the Irish university system. Further university-wide thematic or topic reviews will be conducted in the future.

Put in place mechanisms to ensure undergraduate students are more aware of the quality assurance process and contribute to this.

In 2006, DCU introduced an Annual Student Forum for Quality and, in 2009, the website 'Your Voice Heard' in cooperation with the Students' Union in order to increase undergraduate students' awareness of the quality process and in order for students to contribute to the processes.

Management and Governance

Develop a more explicit link between the quality review outcomes and strategic management.

DCU has developed a Quality Policy statement in order to facilitate the linking of quality assurance and strategic management. Further efforts will be made to strengthen the links between strategy and quality.

Ensure staff expectations regarding the quality review process are more realistic and long-term.

An effort is made to demonstrate positive changes as a result of reviews. Allocations from a modest Quality Improvement Fund (partially funded by the HEA) for quality specific projects based on quality review outcomes play an important role in this regard. Medium and long-term outcomes resulting from review outcomes are harder to communicate.

Clarify the respective roles of the executive deans, the heads of school and the theme leaders.

The Executive Dean system is now well settled in. Faculty-based reviews help to keep this area under observation.

Ensure that peer review group reports also go to the relevant dean, who should then have the responsibility to oversee implementation.

Due to the integration of faculty and school reviews this issue does not arise any more. However, following the 2004-2005 external review Deans were systematically and routinely involved in all steps of school quality reviews, from the self-assessment process to the QIP and progress reports.

Linked to this, develop further mechanisms to ensure a more consistent follow-up to the quality improvement plans across the university.

Systematic follow-up is guaranteed through progress reports after the conclusion of review processes. University-wide thematic reviews have resulted in more coordinated and synchronised responses to review outcomes.

Identify possibilities to simplify decision-making processes, aiming for decisions on any one topic to be made at two levels only.

The restructuring of faculties has resulted in devolution and simplification of decision-making processes. Some university committees have been realigned to facilitate simpler decision-making processes.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

The first round of institutional quality reviews was completed for NUIM in February 2005. The main recommendations together with the response of the University are set out beneath.

General Recommendations

The university has grown on a traditional disciplinary basis. The EUA team observed, however, a strong and recent growth in interdisciplinary activity, both in terms of new curricula put in place, as well as in the creation of interesting research centres. The team saw these as very positive developments for the university. The university needs to ensure that these centres are supported and further developed during the next phase of development, by putting in place the necessary structures and support elements to ensure their sustainability, including if necessary the focusing of new recruitment in these interdisciplinary structures. It would also be desirable to encourage stronger organic links between these research centres and the academic departments, although the current funding mechanisms do not facilitate this.

The University has supported each of the research institutes including a new inter-disciplinary Institute for the Humanities. A business plan has been agreed with each institute. Core posts required for the leadership and further development of the institutes are being mainstreamed via the core grant. Links have been strengthened between the institutes through joint staffing and participation of Institute staff in teaching programmes. Following a reorganisation of the Faculty structure all Institutes are embedded in the three faculties and regarded as a key resource for delivering the research objectives of Faculty members. The status of the faculties has been elevated to the Standing Committees of the Academic Council.

The need to connect the resource allocation processes, the systematic development of the university and the ongoing diversification of its activities. For example, current allocations to individual departments based on full-time equivalent students cannot cope with the sharing of modules across several departments; if postgraduate numbers and programmes are to be increased, it may be necessary to re-weight postgraduate student FTEs to support this policy; it is not clear how the recent positive growth of interdisciplinary teaching and research activity can be sustained with the current core allocation processes; the need for increased internationalisation at various levels will pose a similar question.

The internal resource allocation model has become more attuned to the full range of objectives of the University. Incentives are now provided to departments who recruit additional postgraduate students and also international students. In inter-disciplinary contexts the resources follow the student full-time equivalents. In the current year, a more complex resource allocation model is being developed that will include performance indicators related to teaching, research and financial sustainability.

The modularisation of all undergraduate teaching programmes is now formally in place, but the full implementation of this is still in progress. The team considers that developing the full potential of this will need special attention, in order to allow, for example, more core modules to be shared across several departments, and a significant increase in the number of students who choose individual elective modules from outside their immediate study fields. An important number of courses offered at NUIM currently include no elective modules whatever. Given the overall size of the university and its recent growth, there is a danger that, without significantly improved possibilities to share modules across departments, an unnecessary doubling of academic supply could result, whereas in fact economies of scale are possible through the opening up of academic structures.

The modularisation system is under review with a view to introducing greater flexibility. Progress to date has been hampered by constraints in relation to timetabling and scarcity of appropriate size teaching rooms and theatres.

The modularisation process should also guarantee that students are able to obtain full recognition of credits legitimately obtained in other institutions of higher education, and the transfer and/or accumulation of these. This is not currently the case. It should be recalled that one of the main purposes of modules and ECTS is to facilitate flexibility, not hinder student mobility.

The issue of credit transfer systems has been addressed and procedures are now in place to consider such requests when they arise.

Modularisation should logically also encourage exchanges with other Irish institutions and foreign universities; furthermore, exchanges can be developed with the world of work, since professional experience can be taken into account, as is already the case in some faculties and departments. These multicultural experiences are essential for the success of students and graduates of NUIM in the global job market which awaits them.

In principle greater student mobility is now possible. For practical reasons it is easier to achieve at postgraduate level. A Memorandum of Understanding on this matter in respect to graduate education has been agreed between the members of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance which includes NUIM.

NUIM has linked its recent development to international benchmarks and trends, and has now become an attractive place for academic staff and students from abroad to work. The EUA team was therefore surprised to note that, in certain parts of the university, only a few students saw their studies or future professional prospects in a European or international arena. Student awareness of higher education trends and developments outside of Ireland was minimal. The team would suggest that to modify this perspective implies

- an explicit international focus across the university, including specific efforts to encourage students and staff to improve their foreign language skills
- increased awareness and involvement of staff in international academic networks, including for staff development and training, thus exposing students indirectly to greater international and intercultural influences
- greater encouragement for students to undertake some period of study abroad
- improved recognition of study and work periods abroad
- increased support for a multicultural approach to higher education and social issues in all parts of the university, using its multidisciplinary basis as an asset for promoting this.

Given the specific characteristics of the NUIM student body, with greater participation rates of mature students and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds than in other Irish universities, encouraging such a renewed international focus for students implies a long-term commitment from the university, including a greatly enhanced package of incentives to overcome specific obstacles. Otherwise many Irish students from NUIM will be further disadvantaged in the European and international labour markets.

The University has taken steps to encourage more students to complete one year of their study at a European University through the BA International Degree. Staff movements, especially through participation in international research networks, have increased. There is also an enhanced inter-cultural awareness on campus through a variety of social and other events as the University now has students from approximately 80 countries according to their nationality. These students account for about 10% of the total student population.

One of the university's current strengths lies in the youth of its academic staff. However, many of these staff are apparently on short-term contracts; this has obvious implications for their long-term Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities commitment to this university. The EUA team would encourage the university, as soon as possible, to offer longer term perspectives to these young academics, thus encouraging them to contribute fully to the ongoing development and dynamism in NUIM. The uncertainty which a large number of young staff currently face could result in the possible serious loss of capacity in a number of academic units across the university. This is a short-term risk which must be countered rapidly by a long-term strategy to consolidate academic teams and to encourage additional new talent to NUIM.

The University staffing arrangements are constrained by the scarcity of financial resources and more recently by the Employment Control Framework. Significant progress had been made in reducing the number of contract posts, but the recently introduced Employment Control Framework is going to reverse this trend as new permanent appointments are prohibited.

One aspect of human resource management at the university has to be seen from the point of view of gender balance, which needs to be addressed through both recruitment and promotion mechanisms, particularly to positions of responsibility. The EUA team was pleased to note that the President has already made plans to remedy this.

The University is an equal opportunities employer. Where possible, steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in membership of boards and committees.

In the current stage of its development, the university needs to develop an explicit research strategy. In the opinion of the EUA team, this seemed vital in order to ensure that a variety of dispersed research and funding initiatives find their place in a coherent structure. We would encourage the university to identify areas of strength and possible growth around which it can focus its future research development and its international impact. This might lead to the creation of several further centres with high visibility, and to support for other teams of critical mass working in networks with Irish or other institutions.

A very effective research strategy has been put in place which has underpinned many successful bids for competitive funding. The evidence is that NUIM performs well above its size in winning research grants. The most recent Institutional Review commented favourably on a very impressive performance in research outputs. Significant progress is also being made on commercialisation of research outputs following a model that has attracted considerable external interest.

Future research strengths will depend to a large degree on success in developing PhD and postdoctoral activity – itself a clear sign of success in developing research at the university. Attention needs to be paid to the conditions in which many of these young researchers currently work. The university may also need to develop a more explicit strategy to bring suitable students to postgraduate and PhD levels in selected fields. This could include the provision of joint degrees in some areas with other universities in Ireland or elsewhere, thus helping to attain critical mass and widen the scope of such activity at NUIM.

The rapid increase in the number of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers has placed considerable pressure on the available space for these researchers. The University has responded by providing additional spaces in most of the academic departments. A very significant increase in space provision for PhD and postdoctoral researches in the humanities and social sciences will become available in summer 2010 with the completion of a major new building. The NUIM Research Strategy is supported by a Graduate Education Strategy that incorporates a new approach to the training and education of PhD students. Where appropriate, and subject to the availability of funding, PhD students are encouraged to avail of opportunities to spend some time in another university or research institute. A small number of such moves have been facilitated by small travel grants. In addition, an inter-institutional protocol has been prepared to facilitate students who may be registered in more than one higher education institute.

The university will need to develop an intermediate level of professional administrative staff which can support and implement many of the issues covered in this report. The current fragmented dispersal of these key players across many small departments and units of the university does not permit this. This issue also needs to be discussed fully when addressing the university's current academic structures, since it may serve the university's needs better to bring these key players together at faculty level, or around cognate groups of departments, or in some cases at central university level.

The distribution of departments has been reorganised across a smaller number of Faculties. The roles and responsibilities of Faculty Deans have been redefined and codified and additional back up support is available via the Deans Office. Four Schools have been established with each consisting of a number of departments.

In the opinion of the EUA team, during the next phase of its development the university can increasingly benefit from strategic advice coming from a range of the university's essential partners. Its already effective local and regional partnerships can be a real asset in developing this. In order for this to take place, a pro-active role on the part of the Governing Authority will be crucial. The Governing Authority will however need to be provided by the university executive with the necessary elements, both information and tools, for it to play this role in the strategic development of the University, including in the preparation of the new Strategic Plan.

Since the last review, a new Strategic Plan has been prepared for the period 2006-2011. Following a mid-term review in 2009 a revised plan was produced. The review and preparation process was highly consultative with inputs from Governing Authority members at different stages. The Authority is kept informed on implementation via annual strategic work programmes and regular monitoring via a suite of key performance indicators.

The need for increased institutional research capacity, including an improved and integrated data management system was mentioned several times to the EUA team. This would appear necessary both to support central university management with strategic data and analysis, as well as to provide a greater range of easily accessible information to units across the university and to external partners. This information will be vital for planning and monitoring, and will also be of significant support to units preparing for the Quality Review process.

An Institutional Research Officer (IRO) has been appointed with responsibility for collecting and analysing data from a range of sources within and external to the University. The IRO is a key provider of data for all major strategic initiatives taken by the University.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

Act	Universities Act 1997
DCU	Dublin City University
Department	Department of Education and Skills
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IUA	Irish Universities Association
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
Minister	Minister for Education and Skills
Ministers	Minister for Education and Skills and Minister for Finance
NPRF	National Pensions Reserve Fund
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
RGAM	Recurrent Grand Allocation Model
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SIF	Strategic Innovation Fund
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UL	University of Limerick
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council