

Minutes of the forty-second meeting of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council which took place on Sunday, 8 June 2008 in Hayfield Manor Hotel, Perrott Avenue, College Road, Cork at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Chairperson:	Professor Séamus Smyth
Chief Executive:	Séamus Puirseil
Secretary:	Tadhg Ó hÉalaithe
Members:	Dr. Barbara Brittingham Mr. Michael Carmody Ms. Marion Coy Ms. Margaret Duignan Ms. Mary McGlynn Mr. Stan McHugh Mr. Peter Mannion Mr. Paddy Murray Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan Ms. Marion Palmer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Bryan Maguire
Ms. Caitríona Lawless

APOLOGIES:

Dr. Finola Doyle-O'Neill
Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty
Mr. Norman Sharp OBE

The Chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming all Council Members in attendance.

1. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson REMINDED Council of the stages of the Chief Executive recruitment process to date. Council NOTED that following the final round of interviews held on 8 April 2008, the interview panel reached a unanimous agreement on a candidate to fill the position. Council NOTED that discussions with the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Finance regarding the terms and conditions of the contract were still ongoing and as a result, there would be a delay in making an appointment. Council NOTED an annotated version of the proposed candidate's CV which was circulated at the Meeting and AGREED to appoint Gearóid Ó Conluáin as Chief Executive of HETAC with effect from 3 September 2008 subject to the terms and conditions of a contract of employment and to the consent of the Minister for Education and Science.

Council NOTED that the current Chief Executive would vacate office on

leave on 20 June 2008 until the effective date of his retirement on 2 September 2008 and as a result this would be his final Council Meeting. Council AGREED to the appointment of Tadhg Ó hÉalaithe, Director of Corporate Services and Secretary to the Council as the interim Acting Chief Executive as a transitional measure with effect from 21 June 2008. Council AGREED to meet at the earliest possible date after 2 September 2008 if the recruitment process had not been brought to a satisfactory conclusion by that date.

Council NOTED that a letter dated 18 March 2008 from the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) had been received and AGREED that in light of the current ongoing process in relation to the appointment of a new Chief Executive that no real progress could be made until the position had been filled. Council AGREED to appoint a small committee to examine the recommendations from the LRC, who would then advise the Chairperson and new Chief Executive. Council AGREED to nominate Paddy Murray (member of the Audit Committee) and Mary McGlynn as members of the Committee who would work together with Tadhg Ó hÉalaithe in his role as Acting Chief Executive from 20 June 2008 and NOTED that the Committee would report back to Council at its next meeting scheduled for 22 September 2008.

Council NOTED that a function to mark the retirement of Séamus Puirseil as Chief Executive would be held in the National Gallery of Ireland on 17 June. The Chairperson, on behalf of Council, WISHED Séamus Puirseil well for the future and NOTED his contribution as the first and to date only Chief Executive of HETAC, and his contribution to higher education through HETAC, to Ireland, Europe and beyond.

Séamus Puirseil THANKED the current and previous Councils for all their co-operation and hard work during their terms of office; THANKED all current and past staff of HETAC and EXPRESSED a particular debt of gratitude to Gail Brady of his office for all her assistance over the past 10 years.

The meeting adjourned until 11:00 a.m. on Monday, 9 June 2008.

Minutes of the forty-second meeting of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council which took place on Monday, 9 June 2008 in the Cork School of Music, Union Quay, Cork at 11:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Chairperson:	Professor Séamus Smyth
Chief Executive:	Séamus Puirseil
Secretary:	Tadhg Ó hÉalaithe
Members:	Dr. Barbara Brittingham Mr. Michael Carmody Ms. Marion Coy Ms. Margaret Duignan Ms. Mary McGlynn Mr. Stan McHugh Mr. Peter Mannion Mr. Paddy Murray Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan Ms. Marion Palmer Mr. Norman Sharp OBE

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Bryan Maguire
Ms. Caitríona Lawless

APOLOGIES:

Dr. Finola Doyle-O'Neill
Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 7 April 2008

The Minutes of the Meeting of 7 April 2008 circulated as C/M41 were confirmed and signed.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes

Item 4 – C/M40

Council NOTED that a report on the Honorary Conferring Ceremony would be dealt with under Item 5 of today's agenda.

Item 5.2. – C/M41

Council NOTED that the Executive will raise the matter of titles for Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose Awards at the next Tripartite Meeting on Friday, 13 June 2008.

Item 8 – C/M41

Council NOTED that Decentralisation would be dealt with under Item 8 of today's Agenda.

Item 10 – C/M41

Council NOTED that the Research Assistant post (2 year contract) had been filled and the candidate is due to commence work shortly.

4. Correspondence

Council NOTED the letters of 17 April 2008 from Seán Ó Foghlú, Chief Executive of NQAI, 23 April 2008 from Séamus Puirscil to Seán Ó Foghlú and the reply of 2 May 2008 from Seán Ó Foghlú circulated as C/A42/4.1. to C/A42/4.3. respectively regarding Funding for 2008. Council NOTED the Authority's decision to allocate €2,944,917 for the year 2008. Council AGREED to discuss these letters further under Item 9 of today's Agenda.

5. Honorary Conferring

Council NOTED that the conferring of Honorary Degrees had taken place in No. 6 Kildare Street on Thursday, 24 April 2008 at which many Council Members were present. Council CONGRATULATED the recipients of the Honorary Degrees and paid tribute to the citators for their excellent contribution to the ceremony.

6. Chief Executive's Report

Council NOTED the Chief Executive's Report circulated as C/A42/6.1. Council NOTED that a meeting of Chief Executives of Agencies under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science had taken place on 19 May 2008 and among the items discussed was the Efficiency Review of Expenditure by Departments and State Agencies. Council NOTED that representatives of the 3 bodies (HETAC, FETAC and NQAI) had met with the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment at which there was an assurance given that the Department of Education and Science would consider the recent HETAC submission on fees on an immediate basis.

Council NOTED that HETAC had hosted an External Examining Workshop on 30 April 2008 which had proven to be very useful. Council NOTED that the Chief Executive had met with the Expert Group conducting the Quality Review of the IUQB on 21 April 2008. Council also NOTED that a portrait of the first HETAC Chairperson, Professor Ciaran Murphy was unveiled in the Boardroom of HETAC's Offices, Denzille Lane on 19 May.

Council VIEWED the recent advertisement commissioned to promote HETAC Awards in parallel to campaigns for the National Framework of Qualifications and FETAC. Council NOTED the letter of 17 April 2008 from the Qualifications Authority (previously referred to as C/A42/4.1. in paragraph 4 above) which referred to the joint national marketing strategy and for which €500,000 had been allocated for the 3 bodies.

Council NOTED that the Executive had raised at the Council Meeting on 7 April 2008, the fact that HETAC's period as secretariat to INQAAHE was nearing an end and that expressions of interest had been requested. Council NOTED that the NVAO in the

Netherlands had taken over the role of secretariat with effect from 1 June 2008 and both Agencies had overlapped roles briefly during the month of May.

Council NOTED that a fees proposal had been submitted to the Department of Education and Science and this would be discussed further under Item 9 of today's Agenda.

7. Academic Committee

7.1. Council NOTED the draft minutes of the fifth meeting of the Academic Committee held on 28 April 2008, circulated as C/A42/7.1. and NOTED that the final Committee meeting of the current academic year will take place on 30 June 2008. Council NOTED that operational guidelines for Institutional Reviews had been developed and that standards for Complementary Therapies were nearing the final stages of completion. Council NOTED that the Committee had requested the Executive to look at developing separate policies on the Support and Monitoring of New Providers, particularly in the light of ongoing discussions regarding support services.

7.2. Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum and the Panel's report on the Application by Warnborough College, Ireland Ltd. for Agreement of Quality Assurance Procedures tabled as C/A42/7.2. Following discussion, Council ADOPTED unanimously the Panel's report and REQUESTED the Executive to inform the College of the outcome.

8. Decentralisation Update

Council NOTED that the Chief Executives and Directors of Services for the 3 bodies (HETAC, FETAC and NQAI) met with the Decentralisation Implementation Group (DIG) on 20 May 2008 at the Department of Finance at which the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science, Brigid McManus and Principal Officer, Deirdre McDonnell were also present. Council NOTED that among items referred to were the revised plans submitted by the 3 bodies to the OPW noting that the space required exceed the norm laid down by the OPW; that it would be some years before FETAC would be in a position to consider a move due to the implementation and bedding down of its new business processes (new awards and standards, new assessment and authentication procedures – underpinned by the new IT system being developed and rolled out across the entire FET Sector); HETAC's dependence on external panels to a large extent to carry out its validation work and the increasing number of participants who had to travel from outside the country and that no central arrangements had been made for the redeployment of the staff of State Bodies deciding to remain in Dublin. Council NOTED that the Decentralisation Implementation Group is expected to submit a report to Government at an early date.

9. Financial Matters

9.1. Council NOTED HETAC's Financial Out-turn for the 5 month period to 31 May 2008 tabled as C/A42/9.1. and NOTED the comparison of expenditure for the first 5 months of 2008 (€1.4m) with the expenditure for the first 6 months of 2007 (€1.6m). Council NOTED the expected shortfall in grant income this year. Council NOTED that a significant amount of the increased

pay expenditure for the remainder of the year relates to lump sum payments for new pensioners.

- 9.2. Council NOTED the oral report on the Audit Committee Meeting which had taken place on 19 May 2008. Council NOTED that a presentation on HETAC's Business Continuity Plan (including ICT facilities) was made to the Audit Committee by two members of HETAC staff and NOTED that the Committee was satisfied that the Plan is in line with best practice. Council FURTHER NOTED that issues relating to Business Continuity will be an ongoing item on the Audit Committee Agenda.

Council NOTED that the Internal Auditor had been indisposed due to illness for the past 6 months, Council EXTENDED its best wishes to Ms. O'Meara and NOTED her intention to return to work later this month.

Council NOTED the Audit Committee's concern regarding current pension costs and ADOPTED the Committee's recommendation that Council requests a meeting between the Chairperson of HETAC and the Minister for Education and Science to discuss the Exchequer guarantee of Superannuation entitlements to individuals and the impact of discharging that liability on the financial position of HETAC and requiring that specific general provision be made for this outlay each year going forward.

- 9.3. Council NOTED the Draft HETAC Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2007 circulated as C/A42/9.3. which have been furnished to the Comptroller and Auditor General. Council NOTED that the C&AG (through an outside contractor) had completed an on-site audit in early May 2008. Council ADOPTED the Financial Statements subject to any amendments which may be requested by the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- 9.4. Council NOTED the Review of HETAC's System of Internal Financial Controls circulated as C/A42/9.4. and NOTED that normal procedure would see the Chairperson verify that a review of Internal Financial Controls had been undertaken annually. Council NOTED that while the Internal Auditor had been absent due to illness for the past 6 months and had previously completed a thorough review in 2006/07, the Executive had carried out a similar exercise for the current year.

Council APPROVED the Review and NOTED that the issue of PMDS had been put on hold given the current situation regarding the end of the term of office of the Chief Executive and the recruitment process for his successor. Council NOTED that the Executive would revert to Council at a future meeting regarding developments in this area.

- 9.5. Council NOTED the Financial Position for the year to 31 December 2008 – Revised Budget circulated as C/A42/9.5. and FURTHER NOTED that a submission to the Department of Education and Science regarding Fees to be charged by HETAC had been made on 30 January 2006 but that to date no determination on fees had been made by the Department. Council NOTED

that a revised submission had been sent to the Department on 28 April 2008 and NOTED the proposal of the Executive to charge an annual fee per student in Institutes of Technology which would cover all dealings with HETAC for that particular year. Council NOTED that some of the current fees charged do not reflect the true work and cost involved on HETAC's behalf. Council NOTED that there has been ongoing communication with Department officials on this matter and the Executive will continue to deal with it as a matter of priority. Council REQUESTED that the matter should be on the Agenda of its next meeting on 22 September 2008.

10. Providers' Perspective on the activities/role of HETAC

Council NOTED the presentations on Provider Perspectives on the activities/role of HETAC made by Dr. Brendan Murphy, President of Cork Institute of Technology and Mr. Michael O'Mahony, Group Training Manager of Thomas Crosbie Holdings.

11. Any Other Business.

Council Members were joined at the end of the meeting by the Minister for Education and Science, Mr. Batt O'Keeffe T.D. Council NOTED the Minister's intention to meet with the Chairs of each Agency under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science in the coming months and his appreciation of the work done by the HETAC Council and staff to date. The Chairperson on behalf of the Council THANKED the Minister for his attendance at the Council Meeting.

The Chairperson on behalf of the Council also THANKED Dr. Geoffrey Spratt and his staff for the tour and use of the facilities at the Cork School of Music. The Chairperson also extended his gratitude to Dr. Brendan Murphy and Mr. Michael O'Mahony for their presentations and contributions to the meeting.

The next meeting of Council will take place in the Boardroom of HETAC Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2 on Monday, 22 September 2008 at 11:00 a.m. (10:30 a.m.)

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____