

Minutes of the fortieth meeting of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council which took place on Monday, 4 February 2008 in HETAC Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, 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 Dr. Finola Doyle-O'Neill Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty Mr. Peter Mannion Ms. Mary McGlynn Mr. Stan McHugh Mr. Paddy Murray Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Bryan Maguire
Dr. Peter Cullen (Items 6.3, 6.4 and 7)
Ms. Caitríona Lawless

APOLOGIES:

Ms. Margaret Duignan
Ms. Marion Palmer
Mr. Norman Sharp OBE

The Chairperson WELCOMED Mr. Peter Mannion to his first Meeting as a Member of the Council. The Chairperson EXPRESSED sympathy on behalf of the Council to Mr. Stan McHugh on the recent death of his sister, Anne Milligan.

1. Minutes of the Meetings of 3 December 2007 and 7 January 2008

The Minutes of the Meeting of 3 December 2007 circulated as C/M38 and the Minutes of the Meeting of 7 January 2008 circulated as C/M39 were confirmed and signed.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

Item 5 – C/M37 under Matters Arising C/M38
Council NOTED that the Executive had received a number of replies from the Registrars of Universities, in response to its consultation on the Draft Standards for Complementary Therapies and this would be discussed under Item 6 of today's agenda.

Item 4 – C/M38

Council NOTED that Honorary Degrees would be dealt with under Item 4 of today's agenda.

Item 9 – C/M38

Council NOTED that ICT Meetings had been taking place on a regular basis mostly weekly. Council also NOTED that the review of Financial Controls for 2007 set to take place in January 2008 had been deferred due to the absence due to illness of the Internal Auditor. Council NOTED that the review is now expected to take place in March 2008.

Item 10 – C/M38

Council NOTED that Staffing would be dealt with under Item 11 of today's agenda.

C/M39

The Chairperson REMINDED the Council of the intention of the Chief Executive to retire from his post with effect from 31 August 2008 but that his taking up of an agreed holiday entitlement would mean an effective departure from office by the latter part of June. Council NOTED that in order to facilitate a smooth transition for the incoming Chief Executive and any restructuring plans which may arise following the appointment, 2 Head of Function vacancies were being filled on a contract basis. Council further NOTED that responsibility for many day to day matters has been reassigned to the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Academic Affairs while the Chief Executive remains responsible for the performance of his statutory functions. Further discussion on the recruitment process for Chief Executive would be dealt with under Chairperson's Business on today's agenda. The Chairperson REQUESTED any person in attendance at the meeting who was not a member of Council or any member who had an interest in the recruitment process for the Chief Executive post to absent themselves for that item which would be the last item on the agenda.

3. Correspondence

3.1. Council NOTED the letter of 7 January 2008 from Ms. Brigid McManus, Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science circulated as C/A40/3.1. regarding an Efficiency Review of Expenditure by Departments and State Agencies, arising from An Tánaiste's 2008 Budget day announcement. Council NOTED the response of 23 January 2008 from the Chief Executive which was tabled at the meeting. Council also NOTED that a meeting of the Chief Executives of State Agencies under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science had taken place to explore opportunities to share services while also taking account of the independence of function of each Agency involved. Council NOTED that the Executive would continue to advance this process.

4. Honorary Degrees

Council NOTED that each of the five candidates nominated for Honorary Degrees in 2008 had formally accepted the invitation issued by the Secretary on behalf of the Council. Council also NOTED that a provisional date of 22 April 2008 had been suggested for the conferring but that date may be changed to later that week depending on the availability of the Minister for Education and Science to be present to present the awards. Council NOTED that a special Council Meeting may be held on the same day should there be developments in the recruitment process for the Chief Executive post.

5. Chief Executive's Report

- 5.1. Council NOTED the Chief Executive's Report which was circulated as C/A40/5.1. Council NOTED that as a result of regular ICT Meetings, issues which had arisen in an audit of the ICT systems were being dealt with in a vigorous and robust manner. Council NOTED that arising from discussions with the Defence Forces, the Chief Executives of HETAC, FETAC and the NQAI are due to meet with the Chief of Staff with a view to having all defence force training courses placed on the National Framework of Qualifications. Council NOTED that a workshop dealing with this area would be held in the Military College, the Curragh Camp on 7 February 2008. Council NOTED that the Secretary to the Council had represented HETAC at the invitation of the Department of Education and Science, at the Joint Working Group Meeting on Education, Malaysia-Ireland, held in Malaysia at the end of January. Council NOTED that HETAC had supplied the secretariat to the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 2003 and its current term would be completed in June 2008. Council NOTED that while this provision had required a heavy commitment on HETAC's part in terms of cost and staff time, there had been significant reputational benefit garnered in the international HE sector. Council was of the view that another higher education agency should, if possible, take over the secretariat from June 2008. Council NOTED that the Chief Executive had represented HETAC at the CHEA International Commission meeting in Washington DC in late January.
- 5.2. Council NOTED the Minutes of the Tripartite Meeting (Chief Executives and Directors of NQAI, FETAC and HETAC) held on 13 December 2007, circulated as C/A40/5.2. and that the next Tripartite Meeting is scheduled for 26 February 2008. Council WELCOMED the intention of the three bodies to meet with the Department of Education and Science shortly to discuss various issues relating to the pension schemes of the three agencies. Council NOTED that in light of the retirement of the current HETAC Chief Executive, the Executive had agreed with the NQAI to defer any revisions to the HETAC Strategic Plan until Autumn 2008 in order to allow the new Chief Executive to have an input into the Council's strategic planning process. Council also NOTED that the Framework Implementation and Impact Study would commence shortly.

6. Academic Committee of Council

- 6.1. Council NOTED the draft minutes of the third meeting of the Academic Committee held on 21 January 2008, circulated as C/A40/6.1. Council NOTED the recommendation of adoption by the Academic Committee of the Titling Convention for Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards as set out in the minutes. Following discussion on the issues raised, Council REQUESTED the Executive to discuss the matter with Executives of the three bodies at the next Tripartite Meeting and bring back to the next meeting of the Academic Committee on 3 March 2008 before Council meets again on 7 April. Council NOTED that some responses had been received from the Registrars of Universities following the consultation on Draft Standards for Complementary Therapies and NOTED that further discussions were due to take place on the matter at a meeting of the University Registrars due to take place at the end of January. Council NOTED that the Academic Committee had recommended that the Executive should, develop standards for the Social Care and Humanities areas. Council NOTED that a clarification regarding the alignment of professional qualifications at Level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications would appear on the HETAC website shortly.

- 6.2. Council NOTED the information note circulated as C/A40/6.2. relating to the following new provider which had its first programme validation approved by the Academic Committee at the meeting of 21 January 2008:

- Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science

Council NOTED that significant consideration had been given by the Programme Validation Panel to the programme/award title which resulted in the title of Bachelor of Science in Applied Health Science being validated. This provider has now completed the final stage of its Quality Assurance assessment and Council AGREED its quality assurance procedures.

Council SUGGESTED that it would be helpful to include more background information on new providers who had their Quality Assurance Procedures agreed under the first HETAC Council's term of office and returning for final approval under this agenda item. Council NOTED that new provider applications were still being processed under the existing HETAC policy and also NOTED the request of the Academic Committee that Council consider adopting the draft Policy on New Providers which had recently been recommended to Council by the Committee. Council NOTED that the Executive hoped to have the draft Policy on New Providers submitted to Council at its Meeting on 7 April 2008.

Dr. Peter Cullen, Head of Research and Policy Analysis was in attendance for this item.

- 6.3. Council NOTED the Higher Doctorate Award Standard, Policy and Assessment circulated as C/A40/6.3. Following lengthy discussion during which Council EXPRESSED caution at the addition of a Higher Doctorate to HETAC's suite of awards, Council NOTED that the Higher Doctorate appears at Level 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications and as a result, standards need to be developed. Council REQUESTED the Executive to revert back to the NQAI regarding the wording of these standards, both in light of the concerns of Council and the upcoming Framework Implementation and Impact Study. Council SUGGESTED that the establishment of a subgroup made up of representatives of the various bodies, including Universities, within the HE sector to discuss various options and outcomes in this area may be beneficial.

Dr. Peter Cullen, Head of Research and Policy Analysis was in attendance for this item.

- 6.4. Council NOTED the Information Note on HETAC's engagement with the Boards and Committees of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), circulated as C/A40/6.4.

7. Academic Matters

Dr. Peter Cullen, Head of Research and Policy Analysis was in attendance for this item.

- 7.1. Council NOTED the Draft Joint Awards, Collaborative Provision and Cross-Border Programmes Policy and Criteria, circulated as C/A40/7.1. and NOTED the intention that this draft Policy would replace the existing policies on Joint Awards and Overseas Awards and would take account of developments such as Delegation of Authority to Institutes of Technology as well as OECD and UNESCO Guidelines in this area. Council APPROVED the draft document as a consultation document and REQUESTED the Executive to proceed with the consultation process.

7.2. Council NOTED the Draft Policy on Special Monitoring of New Providers circulated as C/A40/7.2. Council NOTED that while HETAC should maintain an appropriate relationship with new providers relating to its monitoring functions, it was felt that with the diversity of new providers entering the Higher Education Sector, there is a significant need for guidance and monitoring during the first year of accreditation of a new provider. Council REQUESTED the Executive to rewrite the draft Policy in relation to the issues raised at the meeting and to consult with providers on the basis of that discussion.

8. MORI Survey

Council NOTED the extract from the Draft Final Report of the MORI Survey of Employers and Learners carried out in October/November 2007 and circulated as C/A40/8.1.

9. Decentralisation Update

Council NOTED that there had been no major developments in the Decentralisation process since its last meeting. Council NOTED that Members would be kept informed of any developments at future Council Meetings.

10. Financial Matters

Council NOTED the Financial out-turn for the 12 month period to 31 December 2007, circulated as C/A40/10.1.

11. Staffing

Council NOTED that following recent advertisements, 2 Temporary Heads of Function (Development Officer) would be commencing 1 year contracts in early February and early March respectively. Council NOTED that the decision to advertise the posts for 1 year contracts was to facilitate any restructuring etc. which the new Chief Executive may wish to implement. Council also NOTED that a Grade V officer had been recruited on a 1 year contract in early January and a Post Doctorate Research Assistant (2 year contract) had been advertised on 1 February 2008.

12. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson BRIEFED Council on developments in relation to the Chief Executive recruitment process to date. Council NOTED the publication of the advertisement in the Irish Times on Friday, 18 January, the Sunday Times on 20 and 27 January and Foinse on Sunday, 27 January 2008. Council also NOTED the composition of the Select Committee consisting of the Chairperson (Chair of the Committee), and Council Members Marion Coy and Paddy Murray. The Select Committee had met earlier on the morning of this meeting. Council NOTED that a shortlist of suitable members with senior expertise of the Public/Private Sector had been compiled at that meeting and it was expected that the final position on the Selection Committee would be filled shortly. Council NOTED the closing date for applications for the post is 15 February 2008 and the current timetable for the process would hope to see a nomination for the position going to Council for approval at the Council Meeting on 7 April 2008. Council NOTED that should a delay arise in the process, a special Council Meeting may be held later in April to coincide with the date of the Honorary Conferring ceremony.

13. Any Other Business

No business.

The next meeting of Council will take place in the Boardroom of HETAC Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2 on Monday, 7 April 2008 at 11:00 a.m. (10:30 a.m.)

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____