

Minutes of the forty-fifth meeting of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council which took place on Monday, 16 February 2009 in HETAC Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, at 10:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

Chairperson:	Professor Séamus Smyth
Chief Executive:	Gearóid Ó Conluain
Secretary:	Tadhg Ó hÉalaithe
Members:	Dr. Barbara Brittingham Mr. Michael Carmody Ms. Marion Coy Dr. Finola Doyle-O'Neill Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty Ms. Mary McGlynn Mr. Stan McHugh Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan Mr. Bartley Rock

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Bryan Maguire
Ms. Tara Ryan (Items 6 and 7)
Ms. Caitríona Lawless

APOLOGIES:

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

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 8 December 2008

The Minutes of the Meeting of 8 December 2008 circulated as C/M44 were confirmed and signed.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

Item 2 – C/M44

Council NOTED that the Executive had paid HETAC's costs incurred in the Warnborough College case and was currently awaiting notification of the College's legal fees.

Item 2 – C/M44

Council NOTED that a Freedom of Information request had been received from the Acupuncture Foundation, Irish Institute of Chinese Medicine relating to the requirement of having a federation of professional bodies/associations established within that therapy, before a programme could be validated.

Item 5 – C/M44

Council NOTED that the Draft Institutional Review Report of Institute of Technology, Sligo had been forwarded for comment/response to the Institute in the past week and the Executive hopes to place the draft report before the Academic Committee at its meeting scheduled for 30 March 2009 and before Council at its meeting on 27 April 2009.

Item 6 – C/M44

Council NOTED that the Policy and Procedures on Registration of Providers and the Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Trans-national Programmes and Joint Awards had been published by the Executive in January 2009.

Council NOTED that Dr. Peter Cullen, Head of Standards, Research and Policy Development at HETAC, had been appointed to the Academic Committee and had attended his first meeting on Monday, 19 January 2009.

3. Correspondence

3.1. Council NOTED the letter of 3 December 2009 from Mr. Michael Scanlan, Secretary General, Department of Health and Children to Gearóid Ó Conluain, Chief Executive, HETAC circulated as C/A45/3.1. regarding publication by HETAC of Standards for the Complementary Therapies sector. Council NOTED the Department's support and welcome for the approach which HETAC has adopted.

3.2. Council NOTED the letter of 29 January 2009 from Dr. Jim Murray, Chief Executive, NQAI to Gearóid Ó Conluain, Chief Executive, HETAC circulated as C/A45/3.2. regarding the evaluation of Institute of Technology, Carlow, for an extension of delegation of authority to make awards at Levels 9 and 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Council NOTED the Authority's agreement with Council being satisfied that the Institute of Technology, Carlow, meets the criteria for delegation of authority to make awards, in respect of its existing research programmes at Levels 9 and 10 of the Framework in the fields of Biotechnology and Molecular and Environmental Sciences.

4. Restructuring of HETAC

Council NOTED the Presentation by the Chief Executive on the recent Restructuring of HETAC and NOTED the organisation's new structure which is now divided primarily into 3 sections: General Management and Institutional Quality Assurance Section; Corporate and Learner Awards Service Section and Registration and Accreditation Section, with specified teams dealing with each Section. Council NOTED that the post of Personnel Officer was now reporting directly to the Chief Executive; that approximately 60% of staff are working in new portfolios and many had moved offices within the organisation to aid communications and the team ethos. Council CONGRATULATED the Chief Executive on the effective and efficient manner in which the re-structuring had taken place without disruption to any of the organisation's day to day functions.

5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1. Council NOTED the Chief Executive's Report which was circulated as C/A45/5.1. Council NOTED that the next session of Professional Development for Senior Management would take place at the beginning of March. This session will build on the work carried out in the first tranche delivered on a residential basis in Trim on 15 and 16 December 2008. The Executive stated that the experience to date had been invaluable. Council

NOTED that a request had been received from the Irish Mail on Sunday regarding foreign travel undertaken by staff and Council Members from January 2005 to December 2008 and while this request was not received under Freedom of Information, the information was compiled and released in the interests of openness and transparency. Council NOTED that the Chairperson had also received a letter from the Minister for Education and Science requesting information on foreign travel and confirmation that Council was complying with State regulations relating to expenditure on travel and subsistence. The Chairperson had replied and confirmed that HETAC was in compliance with regulations.

- 5.2. Council NOTED the Draft Minutes of the Tripartite Meeting (Chief Executives and Directors of NQAI, FETAC and HETAC) held on 11 December 2008, circulated as C/A45/5.2.

6. Academic Committee of Council

Ms. Tara Ryan, Head of Provider Registration and Professional Body Recognition, was in attendance for this item.

- 6.1. Council NOTED the draft minutes of the eighth meeting of the Academic Committee held on 19 January 2009, circulated as C/A45/6.1. Council NOTED that the IHEQN Common Principles for Student Involvement in Quality Assurance had been discussed by the Academic Committee and suggestions had been forwarded to the IHEQN. Council NOTED that following the completion of the consultation period, a final document would be brought to Council's attention for adoption. Council NOTED that the consultation process on the Draft HETAC Assessment and Standards 2008 was nearing completion and NOTED the Executive's intention to hold a final meeting of the Reference Group to discuss and resolve any remaining issues. Council NOTED that a final version of the Assessment and Standards document would be brought to its attention for adoption. Council NOTED that details relating to the Terms of Reference and composition of Panels for upcoming Institutional Reviews had been brought to the attention of the Academic Committee.
- 6.2. Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum together with the Report of the Evaluation Group on the Application for Extension of Delegated Authority to make Awards by the Institute of Technology, Tallaght, circulated as C/A45/6.2.1. and 6.2.2. Council NOTED that the Evaluation Group visited the Institute of Technology, Tallaght on 24 September 2008 and NOTED the recommendation of the Academic Committee to adopt the Evaluation Group's findings. Council ADOPTED the report of the Evaluation Group on the Application for Extension of Delegated Authority to Make Awards by the Institute of Technology, Tallaght in respect of research programmes at Levels 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications in the specific fields of Engineering and in Science and at Level 10 in the fields of Biology and of Chemistry. This reflected the expertise of the research-active academic staff of the Institute and Council REQUESTED the Executive to seek the agreement of the National Qualifications Authority to be satisfied that Institute of Technology, Tallaght, meets the criteria determined by the Council for the extension requested. Council NOTED the document on Research Status of all HETAC Providers who offer Research Programmes at either Level 9 or Levels 9 and 10, January 2009, tabled as C/A45/6.2.3. Council NOTED that this document will be available on the HETAC website and will be updated as the need arises.

7. Academic Matters

Ms. Tara Ryan, Head of Provider Registration and Professional Body Recognition was in attendance for this item.

Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum and Draft Guidelines on Participating in an Evaluation Panel as an Expert Assessor, circulated as C/A45/7.1.1 – 7.1.2. Council NOTED that these Guidelines were largely an amalgamated, condensed and updated version of a HETAC document on Conflicts of Interests and Guidelines which were contained within the HETAC Research Policy. Council ADOPTED these Guidelines subject to minor amendments which were suggested during the course of the Council Meeting. Council NOTED that the Executive is currently working on a further document relating to the composition of Panels and sourcing of Members.

8. Amalgamation of Agencies (HETAC/FETAC/NQAI/IUQB) working in Quality Assurance in Education and Training

Council NOTED the Minutes of the first Meeting of the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG), held on 14 November 2008, circulated as C/A45/8.1. Council NOTED that the third Meeting of the IAG had been held on 12 February 2009 and initial discussions on a draft consultation paper on the amalgamation had taken place at that meeting. Council AGREED that when, in the opinion of the Executive, a substantially developed consultation document was drafted, the Executive would circulate it to all Council Members for consideration and it would be discussed at the next Council Meeting. Council PROPOSED to issue a response to the Minister for Education and Science and/or the IAG. Council NOTED that the next meeting of the IAG is scheduled for approximately 5 weeks time.

9. Financial Matters

9.1. Council NOTED the Financial out-turn for the 12 month period to 31 December 2008, tabled as C/A45/9.1. Council also NOTED the significant reduction made in expenditure in the areas of Travel, IT Maintenance etc. throughout the second half of the year, together with an increase in fee income received and the additional funding granted by the Department of Education and Science to meet lump sum and pension costs.

9.2. Council NOTED the oral update on the discussions with the Department of Education and Science on the fees issue. Council NOTED that a revised fees structure is currently awaiting the approval of the Minister for Education and Science. Council NOTED the Executive's intention to apply the fees structure once approved, to private providers during the current academic year, with fees covering the Institutes of Technology coming on stream at a date to be decided by the Department of Education and Science. Council also NOTED that as a result of increases to fees coming into effect, there would be a proportional reduction in the State Grant received by HETAC.

10. Chairperson's Business

10.1. The Chairperson on behalf of Council CONGRATULATED Marion Coy on her appointment to the Government's Task Force on Higher Education.

10.2. Council NOTED the document regarding Delegation of Approval of LJMU/DBS Joint Awarding Agreement tabled at the meeting and NOTED the Executive's background information, tabled as C/A45/10.1., on the matter. Council AGREED, under the circumstances outlined, to delegate fully to the Academic Committee, the authority to approve this agreement, without recourse to confirmation of its decision by Council.

11. 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, 27 April 2009 at **10:30 a.m. (10:00 a.m.)**

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____