

Minutes of the thirty-fifth meeting of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council which took place on Monday, 5 March 2007 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:	Mr. Michael Carmody Ms. Marion Coy Ms. Margaret Duignan Ms. Bernadette Farrell Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty Ms. Mary McGlynn Mr. Stan McHugh Mr. Paddy Murray Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan Ms. Marion Palmer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Bryan Maguire
Ms. Caitríona Lawless
Ms. Mary Sheridan (Item 5)
Dr. Peter Cullen (Item 6)

APOLOGIES: Dr. Finola Doyle-O'Neill

The Chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming all Council Members in attendance and welcomed Bernadette Farrell to her first Council Meeting as a Member of the Council.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 22 January 2007

The Minutes of the Meeting of 22 January 2007 circulated as C/M34 were confirmed and signed subject to the following amendment to Item 4: Briefing Document for Council Members –

“..... the development of Quality Assurance Review Systems;” was added to the third paragraph on this item dealing with issues the Council wishes to focus on over the next 5 years.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

Item 2 – C/M34

Council NOTED that the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Services had met with the Assistant Secretary General and other officers of the Department of Education and Science on Friday, 19 January 2007 to discuss outstanding items which require the Department's attention. Council FURTHER NOTED that in the opinion of the Department officials, the matter of fees for Council Members would take some months to progress before a decision was reached. To date, no further feedback had been received on any of the other issues raised at that meeting.

Item 4 – C/M34

Council NOTED that the key targets and briefing on the Council's legal, statutory and ethical standing would be dealt with under Items 8 and 15 of today's agenda.

Item 6.2. – C/M34

Council NOTED that correspondence from the OPW regarding the Decentralisation of HETAC to Edenderry would be dealt with under Item 3 of today's agenda.

Item 10 – C/M34

Nominees to Council

Council NOTED that this would be dealt with under Item 13 of today's agenda.

HETAC/University of Ulster Honorary Conferring

Council NOTED that this would be dealt with under Item 14 of today's agenda.

3. Correspondence

3.1. Council NOTED the letter of 29 January 2007 from the Department of Education and Science regarding the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 circulated as C/A35/3.1. and NOTED that Statement of Interests Forms to be completed for the year to 31 December 2006 had been circulated at the previous Council Meeting. The Director of Corporate Services REQUESTED that any outstanding forms be forwarded to his office as soon as possible.

3.2. Council NOTED the letter of 24 January 2007 from the OPW regarding the Decentralisation Programme circulated as C/A35/3.2. and NOTED that this would be dealt with under Item 10 of today's agenda.

4. Academic Committee of Council

4.1. Council NOTED the proposal for the establishment of an Academic Committee of Council circulated as C/A35/4.1. Council also NOTED that in the past, two sub committees of Council existed, the Programme Accreditation Committee and the Research Degree Programme Committee and the present proposal was to establish an Academic Committee comprising of eleven members which would deal with the matters which arise in the academic area e.g. validations, programmatic reviews, amendments to Orders in Council etc.

Council DISCUSSED the proposal at length and AGREED to amend the Committee's Terms of Reference to allow the Committee to have an advisory role or require the Committee's decisions to be subject to Council confirmation in relation to the following functions:

- to determine standards of Council awards
- to recognise professional awards for alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications
- to approve reports of institutional reviews and
- to approve guidelines for academic quality enhancement.

Council also AGREED to delegate authority to the Academic Committee to make decisions in relation to the following functions:

- to accredit programmes of higher education and training
- to accredit research degree programmes, through individual case registration, approval of fields of learning, and accreditation to maintain a register
- to approve amendments to the Orders in Council for programmes delegated to recognised institutions
- to re-accredit programmes on foot of programmatic reviews
- to monitor the implementation of recommendations of review panels
- to advise the Council on matters of academic policy and procedures and
- any other function delegated by the Council from time to time.

Council was SATISFIED with the broad balance of the membership proposed for the Academic Committee but REQUESTED the inclusion of two Members of Council on the Committee without necessarily increasing the overall membership (of eleven) already proposed.

Council AGREED that the Academic Committee's term of office should last until the first meeting of the next HETAC Council appointed by the Minister for Education and Science had taken place.

Council AGREED to review the performance of the Academic Committee one year after the Committee had met for the first time.

Council NOTED that the Academic Committee will meet about four times a year and usually a month before a meeting of Council to allow time for reports/documents to be generated for the Council Meetings.

Council ACCEPTED that an Academic Committee would not be in place before the next meeting of Council and in order to allow academic business to be progressed in the interim, AGREED to reinstate the Committee of Council (which functioned from June 2006 to January 2007) to deal with any matters arising in this area and report to the Council at its meeting on 27/28 May 2007.

- 4.2. Council NOTED the document listing issues arising from the Committee of Council Minutes circulated as C/A35/4.2. Council FURTHER NOTED that the Executive is currently agreeing dates with Athlone Institute of Technology and Letterkenny Institute of Technology for site visits relating to their respective applications for the extension to delegation of authority to Level 9.

Council NOTED that an application to establish a new award on the National Framework of Qualifications had been received and would be dealt with under item 4.3.

- 4.3. Council NOTED the document outlining the background and the application from Waterford Institute of Technology requesting the establishment of a new award on the National Framework of Qualifications, circulated as C/A35/4.3.

Council NOTED that several enquiries had been received relating to Named Awards, including a request to review the titles in the Humanities area and a request to revisit the issue of Named Awards in general. Council AGREED to review the matter of Named Awards at its Meeting in September 2007, particularly in light of the review of the National Framework of Qualifications this Autumn.

Council, following a lengthy discussion, AGREED to add the following titles to the list of Named Awards of the Council:

Level 8: Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) *Baitsiléir Ailtireachta (Onóracha)*

Level 9: Master of Architecture *Máistir Ailtireachta*

Marion Coy declared an interest in the following item and was requested by the Chairperson to remain for the discussion, should any clarification be required.

- 4.4. Council NOTED the application, circulated as C/A35/4.4., from Institute of Technology, Sligo for the approval of a newly validated programme.

Council NOTED that the programme in question, the Higher Certificate in Arts in Workplace and Community Studies offered by the Lónra consortium of higher education institutes in the BMW region including Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, had been found to have had some irregularities in its commencement particularly in the matter of the respective roles of the Institutes and the project partners, Equal Ireland. Council NOTED that the matter had since been clarified and a Memorandum of Understanding between all parties had been signed.

Council ORDERED that authority be delegated to the Institute of Technology, Sligo for the programme specified and AUTHORISED the Executive to deal with any similar applications from the other providers in this consortium as appropriate.

- 4.5. Council NOTED that the Minister for Education and Science had signed an Order to commence the Institutes of Technology Act 2006, with effect from 1

February 2007 and NOTED that the Executive will meet with the Higher Education Authority at an early date to discuss matters of mutual interest.

5. Awards Standards

Ms. Mary Sheridan, Head of Recognition and Information Management, was in attendance for this item.

- 5.1. Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum and the Nursing and Midwifery Standards circulated as C/A35/5.1 and C/A35/5.2. respectively. Council NOTED that An Bord Altranais had approved the standards at its Meeting last Autumn. Council FURTHER NOTED that the standards will now apply nationally across the higher education sector to all programmes of education and training in nursing and midwifery and are the first set of standards to do so.

Council ORDERED the publication of the Nursing and Midwifery Standards once minor amendments had been made to the document.

- 5.2. Council NOTED the update document on Standards for Complementary Therapies circulated as C/A35/5.3. and FURTHER NOTED that the Executive was in the process of appointing an Expert Group to develop these standards.

6. New Policy on Learner Assessment Issues – Consultation

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

- 6.1. Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum and the Outline Discussion Document on new Policy on Learner Assessment Issues circulated as C/A35/6.1. and C/A35/6.2. respectively.

Council WELCOMED the Outline Discussion Document and the opportunity to open discussion on this topic. Council NOTED that the range of providers HETAC now deals with had broadened considerably in recent years and issues such as Learner Assessment, Grading Systems and Standards require careful consideration and attention.

The consultation document which will be prepared will expand on the issues, taking into account aspects raised by Council Members at the meeting. Council AGREED to the Executive beginning the consultation process but EXPRESSED concern that the short timeframe of four weeks proposed may not be sufficient.

7. Review of Performance of HETAC under the European Standards for Quality Assurance and under Section 9 of the Qualifications Act.

Council NOTED the progress report on HETAC's response to the Review Panel's Report circulated as C/A35/7.1.

Council NOTED that a Draft Report on the actions proposed by HETAC in the Plan prepared in response to the Review would come before Council at its meeting in September 2007. Council FURTHER NOTED that a colloquium dealing with the

Principles of Good Practice for the Conduct of Programme Accreditation Panels will be held on 24 April 2007. Council NOTED that some of the deadlines set in the Plan had not been met due *inter alia* to the delay in the appointment of a HETAC Council in the latter half of 2006.

8. Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010

Council NOTED the background information and proposal for a Rolling Review of the Strategic Plan, circulated as C/A35/8.1. Council AGREED to revisit the Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 and NOTED that a document dealing with this would be on the Agenda for the Council Meeting in May 2007.

9. Market Research

Council NOTED the Extract from the HETAC Key Stakeholder Survey circulated as C/A35/9.1. Council NOTED that the results of the Survey indicated that the advertising campaign which HETAC ran from late Summer 2006 contributed in some way to the increased awareness found during the course of the survey. Council AGREED that the new advertising campaign should be tailored to suit the target audience and NOTED that the Chief Executive would discuss the matter with Council member, Bernadette Farrell in the light of USI's recent campaigns.

10. Decentralisation Update

Council NOTED the Update Document on Decentralisation circulated as C/A35/10.1. Council also NOTED that this matter had been discussed at the last meeting of the Qualifications Authority which resulted in a letter issued on behalf of the 3 bodies, NQAI, HETAC and FETAC, on 12 February 2007 to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science. Council ORDERED that the Executive should maintain a close watching brief with both the Department and OPW on this matter.

11. Biennial Report, 1 October 2003 – 10 June 2006

Council NOTED the draft Biennial Report circulated as C/A35/11.1. Council SUGGESTED that future reports may be more effective if they were drafted and published on an annual basis. Council THANKED the Executive for the work done on the Biennial Report to date and AGREED to its publication subject to minor amendments.

12. Financial Matters

12.1. Council NOTED the Statement of Income and Expenditure to 31 January 2007 circulated as C/A35/12.1.

12.2. Council NOTED the document on HETAC Finances 2007 which was tabled at the meeting. Council AGREED that the Executive should review its budget and NOTED that the NQAI was expected to decide on the funding for the 3 Bodies (FETAC, HETAC and NQAI) at its meeting on 21 March 2007.

12.3. Council NOTED the Proposal for the reappointment of an Audit Committee circulated as C/A35/12.2. Council NOTED that an Audit Committee had not existed since the previous Council's term of office had been completed. Council AGREED to the appointment of Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty as Chairperson of the Audit Committee and Mr. Paddy Murray as a member of the Audit Committee and FURTHER AGREED that a third Member be appointed at a later date.

13. Nomination of new Council Members in accordance with Section 22(3) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

Council NOTED the oral report from the Chief Executive stating that suggestions had been received from Council Members as requested at the Council Meeting of 22 January 2007 and following discussions with the Chairperson, two nominees had been approached. Council NOTED that to date, one nominee, Norman Sharp OBE had accepted the invitation.

Following discussion and in accordance with Section 22(3) of the Qualifications Act, Council NOMINATED, as a member of the Council for the period to 7 December 2011, Mr Norman Sharp OBE, Director of Quality Assurance Agency, Scotland, being a person with special knowledge and experience related to the functions of the Council and with relevant international experience related to those functions.

Council FURTHER NOTED that Dr. Barbara Brittingham, the Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, had recently been approached as the second nominee and her response is awaited. On the understanding that her response would be positive and in accordance with Section 22(3) of the Qualifications Act, Council NOMINATED as a member of the Council for the period up to 7 December 2011, Dr. Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, being a person with special knowledge and experience related to the functions of the Council and with relevant international experience related to these functions.

14. HETAC/University of Ulster – Conferring of Honorary Degree.

Council AGREED to confer the degree of Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) jointly with the University of Ulster on Mr. Martin McAleese in recognition of his contribution to North-South relations and intercommunity reconciliation.

This conferring will take place at the conferring of the MSc. in Innovation Management in the Public Service - jointly provided by Letterkenny Institute of Technology and the University of Ulster - and awarded by HETAC and the University of Ulster which will take place in Hillsborough Castle on 8 May 2007 and invitations to the ceremony will be issued shortly and will include Council Members.

15. Council Training/Induction – Corporate Governance.

Council NOTED that the Executive is arranging for a Training/Induction Session on Corporate Governance as part of the Council Meeting on Monday, 28 May 2007.

16. Any Other Business.

Council NOTED the document on Revisions to the NCEA Spouses' and Children's Superannuation Scheme 1988 tabled at the meeting. Council NOTED that the provisions of the revised Civil Service Spouses' and Children's Contributory Pension Scheme introduced by the Department of Finance in 1984 were never implemented in the case the NCEA. Council FURTHER NOTED that approval to implement the provisions of the revised scheme had recently been received from the Department of Education and Science. Council APPROVED the adoption of the proposed revisions to the NCEA Spouses' and Children's Superannuation Scheme 1988 as outlined in the document circulated.

The next meeting of Council will take place in Markree Castle, Collooney, Co. Sligo on Sunday, 27 and Monday, 28 May 2007 beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday evening.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____