



High Level Group on
International
Education

12th April 2017
10.00am
Clock Tower, Department of Education and Skills

Minutes

1. Introductions – Introductions were made.
2. Minutes of last meeting for approval – last meeting was held on 13th December 2016, draft minutes were circulated on 22nd December 2016 and no request for amendments were received. Minutes adopted.

3. Update from Chairpersons of HLG Subgroups –
Subgroup 1: A Supportive National Framework – Vincent Landers, DES

Vincent gave the group an update on the work of subgroup 1, in particular the action points from the last meeting of the subgroup on 27th March 2017:

- Members were asked to consider the system wide review of scholarships that will be undertaken this year and were asked to provide suggestions at the next subgroup meeting on what should be included in the Terms of Reference.
- Members were asked to consider the Department of Justice and Equality's draft paper on the third level graduate scheme and come back with any observations by Thursday 30th March.
- It was agreed that the 2017 Government of Ireland Scholarship scheme will continue as in 2016 with a fee waiver provided by the HEIs and a €10,000 stipend provided by DES. There will be an increase in the number of scholarships to 60 (TBC between DES and HEA).

4. Update from Chairpersons of HLG Subgroups –
Subgroup 2: Internationally oriented, globally competitive institutions –
Gemma Irvine, HEA

Gemma updated the group on the most recent meeting of subgroup 2 and the agreed action points from that meeting:

- DJEI to be invited onto the subgroup.
- The regional skills managers will be invited to a future subgroup meeting to present on their work.

- IUA to draft a paper on outward academic mobility and DES to incorporate this paper into a draft proposal for a new fund under the Strategy.
- DES to circulate the midterm evaluation report on Erasmus + once completed.
- Members will produce a short report on where Ireland's interests are best served re mobility and this will inform Ireland's negotiations in the EU in relation to the next iteration of Erasmus +.
- A presentation on opportunities for funding in research area will be provided by the relevant members of the group at a future subgroup meeting.
- HEA will discuss data collection issues with their Statistics Section to clarify the methodology used. The HEA will develop an agreed template and provide HEIs with training on how to complete the template.
- HEA to provide more details to group on benchmarking data used in Australian model.
- HEA to liaise with DES and if possible come back to group with list of potential internationalisation indicators to be used in data collection.
- IUA will provide a report on the EMASI project at a future meeting.

Gemma also asked the group to save the date of 11th December 2017 for a joint HEA-QQI Internationalisation Conference which will be held in the Printworks, Dublin.

5. Updates from Chairpersons of HLG Subgroups –

Subgroup 3: Sustainable growth in the high-quality English Language sector –
Thèrèse Dillon, MEI

Thèrèse provided the group with a summary of the actions under strategic priority 3 in the Strategy. She provided figures from a recently released MEI press release showing a large increase in ELT student numbers from 107,000 to 119,000, which MEI believe is related to the fluctuation in GB£ over the past year.

Thèrèse also updated the group on the action points arising from the last meeting of subgroup 3 on 29th March 2017:

- DES to have a bilateral meeting with DTTAS to discuss their role in EU and non-EU markets before June meeting of the subgroup.
- Department of Justice and Equality to be invited to become members of this subgroup.
- MEI will invite Mauro Biondi of Emerald Cultural Institute, Dublin, to the next SG3 meeting for a focussed discussion on marketing.
- MEI to present its QA system to QQI.

6. Updates from Chairpersons of HLG Subgroups –

Subgroup 4: Succeeding Abroad – Vincent Landers, DES

Vincent provided the group with a brief update of the first meeting of subgroup 1 which took place in January 2017. He also updated the group on the 2nd meeting that took place on 4th April 2017 and the agreed action points from that meeting.

- EI to provide a report on their Q1 activities and activities planned for Q2 and Q3.
- The sector will use the contacts that have been built up through the Erasmus+ programme to further develop relations with high potential markets.
- Members raised concerns over visa processing times for this year with India of principal concern and DFAT will relay back the members' concerns re delay in issuing of visas to the Justice and DFAT working group.
- DES to have Visa Issue as an Agenda Item for next HLG meeting on 12th April 2017.
- EI to further develop their website and enhance their search engine.
- Members to form a working group to explore the possibility of streamlining technology between HEIs and EI in this area.
- Clarification on health insurance for international students issue to be provided to the HLG.
- Sector to consider contacting insurers to discuss potential products at a reduced price for all international students.

7. Members Issues – Visas

There was a discussion on the issue of delays in visa processing times.

DJE updated the group on the background to this issues and the current position. DJE said that their visa team regularly met to discuss the issue with the IUA and other stakeholders. DJE hoped that the problems in visa processing times in India last year would be sorted for this year.

EI asked if there was a target turnaround time for visas, DJE replied 12 weeks, EI stated that this was unacceptable.

EI suggested that Embassies in new markets were very willing to process visa applications and this would reduce the turnaround time to a couple of weeks, DJE committed to looking into this suggestion.

MEI described the UK system of having a trusted agent list which works very well.

8. Member Issues – Third Level Graduate Scheme

DJE updated the group on the new third level graduate scheme which is very close to being announced. They will liaise with DES re announcement date.

Clarification was sought from HECA, HEA and EI re: who the new scheme would apply to.

DJE clarified that it would be available to current students who had yet to graduate. ICOS asked for clarification around level 7 permissions being withdrawn and DJE stated that those students who had a realistic expectation of being eligible for the scheme would get the 6 months permission.

ICOS and THEA welcomed this clarification.

DES added that the draft scheme had gone to Minister Bruton for approval.

9. Member Issues – Health Insurance

ICOS gave the group an update on the issue of health insurance for international students.

HECA said that an international student should not have to bear the burden of community rating.

IUA and ICOS said that clarification on the issue was urgently needed by end of May. DJE clarified that a 1st year international student is covered by ordinary travel insurance but after their first year they must have insurance from an Irish registered provider. DJE also stated that adequate health insurance is required of every cohort of non-EEA visa required immigrants.

10. AOB

IEM

DES gave an update on the IEM. Minister approved the Heads of Bill yesterday, 11th April 2017, and they will go to Cabinet in next couple of weeks. It is hoped that they will be published for pre-legislative scrutiny by mid-May.

Crowe Horwath Report

IUA asked for the Crowe Horwath report to be circulated to the group and DES committed to doing so this afternoon.

Government of Ireland Scholarships

THEA asked for an update on the 2017 GOI Scholarships.

DES advised the group that there will be 60 GOI Scholarships this year, in line with the new Strategy. DES will provide a stipend of €10,000 for each scholarship awardee.

HEA said that a call would go out next week and that HEIs would be able to apply for a wider range of countries this year. The group were informed that the 2018 Scholarship scheme would be a very different model and decisions would be made in the coming months in this regard.

Student Accommodation

ICOS asked for an update on the Student Accommodation Strategy and stated they were very worried about affordability of accommodation for students.

DES informed the group that the strategy would be published towards the end of May/early June.

Review of Scholarships

SFI requested an update on the review of scholarships which was an action under the Strategy, adding that they had a number of new research centres coming online in coming months.

DES informed the group that the review would be to ensure awareness around what's available.

Brexit

HECA raised the issue of the common travel area.

DES stated that it is hoped that the common travel area will remain in place after UK leaves EU.

IUA updated the group on the most recent CAO and UCAS figures which show a big reduction in number of Irish students applying to study in the UK and a similar reduction in the number of UK students applying to study here. There had been a marked increase however in the number of applications to study in Ireland from the rest of the EU.

QQI informed the group that they have had a high number of enquiries from UK language providers seeking to move into the Irish market.

MEI advised that there had been acquisitions from the UK of a large number of their schools.

11. Date of Next Meeting

DES will advise on exact date closer to the time.

ANNEX 1
ATTENDANCE LIST

Representing	Name
<i>Departments and agencies</i>	
Dept. of Education and Skills	Mary Doyle (Chair) Vincent Landers Alan O'Callaghan Wendy Ross Sarah Moroney Mary Whelan
Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade	Alma Ní Choigligh Fiona McCabe
Dept. of Justice and Equality	Michael Walsh Lorna Conway
Dept. of Transport Tourism & Sport	Maria Melia
Enterprise Ireland	Terry McParland
Higher Education Authority	Dr. Graham Love Gemma Irvine Gerry O'Sullivan
Higher Education Consultants Assoc.	Prof. Diarmuid Hegarty
Quality and Qualifications Ireland	Sue Hackett
<i>Representative groups/institutions</i>	
Technological Higher Educ. Assoc.	Joseph Ryan Miriam Ryan
Irish University Association Trinity College Dublin	Lewis Purser Juliette Hussey
Irish Council for International Students	Sheila Power
Marketing English in Ireland	David O'Grady Theresa Dillon
Science Foundation Ireland	Ciara Cotter

Association of Study Abroad Providers
In Ireland (ASAPI) Rebecca Woolf

Union of Students in Ireland Síona Cahill

Apologies

Department of Justice and Equality Gerry O'Regan

Enterprise Ireland Giles O'Neill

Conference of Heads of Irish Colleges
of Education (CHoICE) Holly Cowman

Technological Higher Educ. Assoc. Jim Murray

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland Philip Curtis