bologna **process**

National Report 2005– 2007

Country:	Ireland
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1. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE BERGEN

1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.

Since Bergen, a number of significant developments have taken place. The Institute of Technology Act 2006 was passed and brings responsibility for these institutions (as with the universities) under the Higher Education Authority. Other developments include the continued implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications, the establishment of the Irish Universities Quality Board on a legal basis and the QA reviews undertaken of the Irish Universities and HETAC.

2. NATIONAL ORGANISATION

2.1. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education , the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles

(For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)
(How funds are allocated)
(Areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing)

The **Department of Education and Science** *(www.education.ie)* has overall responsibility for the higher education system in Ireland. It is assisted in its task by a number of agencies vis:

1. The **Higher Education Authority** (HEA) *(www.hea.ie)* which was established in 1972 is responsible for furthering the development and assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education. With the passing of the Institute of Technology Act 2006 the HEA now has responsibility for these institutions. The HEA provides the operational funds to the institutions.
2. The **National Qualifications Authority of Ireland** (NQAI) *(www.nqai.ie)* was established by the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, and is responsible for establishing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications.
3. The **Higher Education and Training Awards Council** (HETAC) *(www.hetac.ie)* which was also established as part of the 1999 Act, is the qualifications awarding body for the Institutes of Technology and other non-university higher education colleges and institutions. HETAC may also delegate the authority to make awards to the Institutes of Technology.

Autonomous and self governing

Universities

The **Universities Act 1997** provides for the academic freedom of the universities. The university, in performing its functions has the right and responsibility to preserve and promote the traditional principles of academic freedom in the conduct of its internal and external affairs. It is entitled to regulate its affairs in accordance with its independent ethos and traditions, and the traditional principles of academic freedom. In doing so it shall have regard to

*   the promotion and preservation of equality of opportunity and access

- the effective and efficient use of resources, and its obligations as to public accountability.

The **Governing Authorities** are required to see that strategic development plans are prepared for periods of not less than three years. Externally, the HEA is involved and has an overseeing role with regard to strategic plans and quality assurance procedures. It is also responsible for the management and disbursement of all recurrent and capital funds to the universities and designated institutions, including the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions and other targeted initiatives promoted by the HEA, including the Strategic Innovation Fund.

DIT.
The DIT Act, 1992 gave DIT authority to regulate its own affairs though its actions require the consent of the Minister of Education in some areas .As DIT is an awarding body, its statutory Academic Council and Governing Body can make all the necessary decisions in the academic domain. Up to the end of 2006 the DIT was financed by an annual grant from the Department of Education and Science and has substantial autonomy in its use of the grant. Staffing levels must be agreed with the Department of Education and Science. The passing of the Institutes of Technology Act 2006 will give greater autonomy to the DIT with the HEA taking on the former roles of the Department in areas such as budgets, finances, borrowings and research.

The Institutes of Technology.
The government established the Institutes of Technology as self-governing autonomous legal entities with a governing body, Director and Academic Council through the RTC Act 1992 and Amendment Act 1994. The institutes may provide such programmes as the governing body considers appropriate. All programmes of higher education and training are validated by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 extended this autonomy to allow Institutes of Technology to apply to HEATC for delegation of authority to make their own awards. Delegation of authority also allows institutes to validate their own programmes subject to the policies and criteria determined by HETAC and within the parameters of the National Framework of Qualifications. To date a number of institutes have achieved delegated authority status up to postgraduate degree level. The passing of the Institutes of Technology Act 2006 will give greater autonomy to the Institutes with the HEA taking on the former roles of the Department in areas such as. budgets, finances, borrowings and research.

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3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure
(For example, number of public/private universities/other HE institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector. Are there different types of institution delivering higher education. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?)

Traditionally the system of third level education in Ireland has comprised the university sector, the Institutes of Technology, the Colleges of Education and other State aided Institutions. All are in receipt of State aid, either via the HEA (in the case of Universities and Colleges of Education) or directly by the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie) in the case of all others, although this is to change in the near future with the passing of the Institutes of Technology Act in 2006.

A number of independent private colleges and other institutions have also been established, some of which have programmes validated by HETAC. These colleges offer a range of courses complementing the existing provision in the higher education and training sector, some of which have programmes validated by HETAC.

Ireland has a binary system of higher education, designed to ensure maximum flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of students and to the wide variety of social and economic requirements.

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However, within each sector, a diversity of institutions offer differing types and levels of programmes. The Universities are essentially concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, together with basic and applied research. The main work of the Institutes of Technology is in undergraduate programmes, with a smaller number of post-graduate programmes and a growing involvement in regionally orientated applied research.

There are seven universities recognised under the Universities Act, 1997 - University College Cork, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Limerick and Dublin City University. The Universities validate and award their own qualifications as well as those of institutions which have agreements with the universities, such as the Colleges of Education.

There are thirteen Institutes of Technology (IoTs), which are designated under the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992. The institutions are Athlone IT, IT Blanchardstown, Cork IT, IT Carlow, Dundalk IT, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Letterkenny IT, Galway-Mayo IT, Limerick IT, IT Sligo, IT Tallaght, IT Tralee and Waterford IT. All of these institutions have been delegated authority by HETAC to make higher education and training awards themselves up to and including, at least, level 8 in the National Framework of Qualifications. They also conduct some programmes leading to awards made by HETAC.

Other higher education colleges and institutions include National institutions, private colleges and other higher education and training institutions. However, under recent legislation any provider of education and training regardless of the source of that provision, whether it is in an educational institution, the workplace or the community, can apply to HETAC for validation of a programme.

Finally, the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) (www.dit.ie) which made its own awards for many years, was awarded degree awarding powers in 1997.

Partnership

4.Describe the structure which overseas the implementation of the Bologna process in your country
(National Bologna group, promoters groups, composition and activities, stakeholder involvement)
A national steering group is in place to oversee the implementation of the Bologna Process. It is chaired by the Department of Education and Science and has nominees of the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology (CoDIT), the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), the Union of Students of Ireland (USI), the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) and the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT).
Ireland also has a number of Bologna Promoters who provide a resource to the wider higher education community in responding to the challenges of the Process.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs
Both students and staff are elected to the Governing Bodies of the Universities and Institutes of Technology. Section 16 of the Universities Act 1997, Section 4 of the Regional College Act 1994 and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1994.

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6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna process

Business and social partners nominate members to the Governing Bodies of the Universities and Institutes of Technology. They also nominate members of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Quality Board. Those with a social and/or business sector perspective are among the nominees of the Minister of Education and Science to the membership of the Higher Education Authority.

The Bologna process is implemented in Ireland through national arrangements for quality assurance and for the National Framework of Qualifications. There is a strong input from the social and business sectors in the development and implementation of policy approaches in these areas.

B. MAIN STOCKTAKING QUESTIONS , INCLUDING SCORECARD ELEMENTS

DEGREE SYSTEM

7. Describe the process made towards introducing the first and second stage process.
(no. of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle system 2006/07)

The cycles are fully in place in Ireland. 100% of higher education students are in one of the three cycles. This has been confirmed by the verification of the compatibility of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna Framework).

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 has been enacted, with one of its key tasks being the establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications. The first milestone was reached in July 2004 with the announcement of the implementation arrangements for the framework in higher education. The Authority has determined that awards at levels 6 to 10 will be made by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the Dublin Institute of Technology, while universities generally make the awards from level 7 to 10.

BOLOGNA CYCLES	NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS		PROVIDERS	
	Awards	Levels		
3	Doctoral Degree	10	Institutes of Technology	Universities
2	Masters Degree	9		Recognised Colleges of the National Uiversity of Ireland
	Post-Graduate Diploma		DIT	
	Honours Bachelor Degree	8		
1	Higher Diploma		Private Colleges and other HEIs	
	Ordinary Bachelor Degree	7		
	Higher Certificate/ Advanced Certificate*	6		
	Fruther Education/ Schools Awards	1 – 5	Entry from Second Level and Further Education and Training	

*The Advanced Certificate is a further education and training award at level 6 and is not aligned with the Bologna Framework.

The framework, however, does not impose any requirements in relation to the duration of programmes, rather, the emphasis is on the development of learning outcomes.

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8. Describe the process made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle
(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

Third cycle study in Ireland is not limited to university provision although the vast majority of third cycle awards are made by the universities. All higher education institutions may provide postgraduate research degrees programmes, in accordance with the principles of the National Framework of Qualifications. Institutes of Technology (excepting DIT) must agree these programmes with HETAC. Level 10 refers to third cycle studies.

Typically doctoral awards (PhD) are obtained by a process of supervised research resulting in the production of a thesis. There are a small number of programmes (professional areas) where there is a substantial taught part in addition to the thesis. The universities and other providers of doctoral studies are now moving towards a more structured system of doctoral education and training based around the concept of graduate schools, with a variety of courses available to assist students and early-stage researchers in their doctoral work.

Irish Doctoral Degrees and Masters Degrees (by research) do not usually have credit values assigned. Emerging practice on professional doctorates provides for a typical model of 180 credits.

Entry to a programme leading to a Doctoral Degree is typically for holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees. The general model is that a holder of an Honours Bachelor Degree with a high classification enters initially onto a Masters research programme, and transfers on to a Doctoral programme after one year on the Masters research programme. In total, the number of years in the Doctoral programme would generally be at least 3 years. Access to Doctoral Degrees is also possible for holders of Masters Degrees whether taught Masters or research Masters.

100% of third-cycle students follow doctoral programmes

9. Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and the second and third cycles
Please include:
- *The percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle*
- *If appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle.*
- *The percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles*
- *The percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle*
- *Specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle*
- *Specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle*
- *Specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area.*
- *Any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles*

The self-certification of the Compatibility of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area has concluded as follows:

- The Irish Higher Certificate is an intermediate qualification within the Bologna first cycle.
- The Irish Ordinary Bachelor Degree is compatible with the Bologna first cycle descriptor.

However, holders of Irish Ordinary Bachelor Degrees and their equivalent former awards do not generally immediately access programmes leading to second cycle awards.

- The Irish Honours Bachelor Degree is compatible with completion of the Bologna first cycle.
- The Irish Higher Diploma is a qualification at the same level as completion of the first cycle, and is a qualification typically attained in a different field of learning than an initial first cycle award.
- The Irish Masters Degree is compatible with completion of the Bologna second cycle.
- The Irish Post-Graduate Diploma is an intermediate qualification within the Bologna second cycle.
- The Irish Doctoral Degree is compatible with completion of the Bologna third cycle.

It is of note that there is an apparent inconsistency or paradox in the treatment of both the Ordinary Bachelor Degree and the Honours Bachelor Degree as first cycle qualifications compatible with the Bologna first cycle descriptor. The compatibility of both with the Bologna first cycle descriptor has been demonstrated in terms of the comparisons of the learning outcomes. Notwithstanding this, these awards are included at two different levels in the Irish framework, with different descriptors, and the Ordinary Bachelor Degree does not typically give access to Masters Degree (second cycle) programmes at present in Ireland.

A summary of the typical arrangements for progression are as follows:

- Entry to a programme leading to a Higher Certificate is generally for school leavers and holders of equivalent qualifications, including FETAC awards.
- Entry to a programme leading to an ab-initio Ordinary Bachelor Degree is typically for school leavers and those with equivalent qualifications. In addition, there are 1-year add-on Ordinary Bachelor Degree programmes for holders of the Higher Certificate.
- Entry to a programme leading to an Honours Bachelor degree is typically for high-achieving school leavers or holders of equivalent qualifications. In addition, there are typically programmes of 1 year duration leading to Honours Bachelor Degrees for holders of Ordinary Bachelor Degrees.
- Entry to a programme leading to a Higher Diploma is typically for holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees but can also be for holders of Ordinary Bachelor Degrees. It is of note that the Higher Diploma is typically in a different field of learning than the initial award.
- Entry to a programme leading to a taught Masters degree is typically for holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees. Also in some cases, entry to such programmes can be permitted for those with Ordinary Bachelor Degrees or equivalent who have some relevant work experience. Furthermore, in some cases, entry to such programmes is permitted for people with extensive experience.
- Entry to a programme leading to a research Masters Degree is typically for holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees, typically with a high classification attained – first or second class honours.
- Entry to a programme leading to a Post-Graduate Diploma is typically for holders of Honours Bachelors Degrees but can also be for holders of Ordinary Bachelor Degrees.
- Entry to a programme leading to a Doctoral Degree is typically for holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees. The general model is that a holder of an Honours Bachelor Degree with a high classification enters initially onto a Masters research programme, and transfers on to a Doctoral programme after one year on the Masters research programme. In total, the number of years in the programme would generally be at least 3 years. There is also access to research Doctoral Degrees for holders of Masters Degrees whether taught Masters or research Masters.

In response to the specific questions

- All Honours Bachelor Degrees give access to the second cycle

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- The general model is that a holder of an Honours Bachelor Degree with a high classification enters initially onto a Masters research programme, and transfers on to a Doctoral programme after one year on the Masters research programme.
- There is access to research Doctoral Degrees for holders of Masters Degrees whether taught Masters or research Masters.

10. **Implementation of National Qualifications Framework**

Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

Please Include:
- *The stage of development of your national qualifications framework (for example: has your national QF been included in legislation or agreed between all relevant stakeholders; has a working group been established; have national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications been prepared; has a timetable for implementation been agreed?)*
- *The extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA*
- *The role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework*

The National Qualifications Authority was established on a statutory basis, under the Qualifications (Education and Training Act) 1999 on 26 February, 2001. This legislation was proposed by the Minister for Education and Science, whose responsibilities include higher education. The legislation can be found here:
http://www.nqai.ie/Qualifications%20(Education%20and%20Training)%20Act,%201999.pdf

Section 7 of the Qualifications Act requires the Authority "to establish and maintain a framework . . . for the development, recognition and award of qualifications in the State based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence".   Under section 8, the Authority is required to "establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications shall be based."

Building on this, the Authority has defined the National Framework of Qualifications to be:

"The single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards."

The Irish Framework was developed by the Authority in consultation with stakeholders. These stakeholders included Government Departments, Funding Agencies, Quality Assurance Agencies, representative bodies for further and higher education institutions, social partners, the community and voluntary sector, professional bodies and learners and the general public. This involved a mixture of consultative mechanisms including calls for public submissions on draft proposals, public conferences and workshops and representative consultative groups.

The Framework was launch in October 2003.

The Irish Framework includes award-types of different classes – major, minor, special purpose and supplemental.

Sixteen major award-types have now been established for the Irish Framework of which 8 are higher education awards-types as follows:

- The Higher Certificate at level 6.
- The Ordinary Bachelor Degree at level 7.
- The Honours Bachelor Degree at level 8.
- The Higher Diploma at level 8.
- The Masters Degree at level 9.
- The Post-Graduate Diploma at level 9.
- The Doctoral Degree at level 10.
- The Higher Doctorate at level 10.

Each of these eight major award-types has a descriptor associated with it which describes the purpose, level, volume, learning outcomes, progression and transfer and articulation associated with it. Each of the award-types is understood to be different from the other award-types in an Irish context and has value and relevance for the labour market and for progression to further learning opportunities. It is generally accepted that there is access across society to employment of different kinds with different levels of higher education awards.

The Irish Framework is required in law to be based on learning outcomes (or as the legislation states, "standards of knowledge, skill and competence") – this is set out in the material provided for in relation to criterion 1.

The descriptors for the major award-types in the framework are based on strands and sub-strands of learning outcomes as follows:

- *knowledge: breadth and kind*
- *know-how and skill: range and selectivity*
- *competence: context, role, learning to learn and insight*

The descriptors for the major award-types are included in appendix 4 of the Authority's determinations document: http://www.nqai.ie/determinations.pdf.

Irish higher education awarding bodies have agreed to use the descriptors of the higher education award-types as the descriptors of the awards that they make.

Under section 8, the Authority is required to "establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications shall be based." The initial Framework policies and criteria have been adopted by the Authority and are available here: http://www.nqai.ie/polandcrit.pdf

Chapter 6 of these policies sets out the process for the inclusion of awards in the Framework as follows:

- "It is the role of the Authority to determine the level indicators and the award-type descriptors. These will form the basis for the setting of standards for named awards by the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

- In relation to school and university awards, the aim is that the level indicators and the award-type descriptors in the framework will be developed in a way that will facilitate the inclusion of these."

It is also of note that under the Qualifications Act, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council has the power to delegate to institutes of technology (other than the Dublin Institute of Technology which already was an awarding body) the power to make awards and that, to date, the

power to make some awards has been delegated to all of the institutes of technology.

Accordingly, Irish higher education awarding bodies are now using the descriptors of the higher education award-types as the descriptors of the awards that they make and it is a matter for them to have processes in place for their own award-making.

Ireland was invited by the chairperson of the Bologna Follow-Up Group Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks to undertake a pilot project of the self-certification of the Compatibility of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. This verification process was completed in 2006.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor degrees.

(% of first cycle 2005/06 graduates who found employment)
(% of first cycle 2005/06 graduates who continued in to second or third cycle)
(extent which it is expected to change in 2006/07)

There is a strong tradition of the relevance to the labour marker of what are now Ordinary Bachelor Degrees and Honours Bachelor Degrees in the National Framework of Qualifications. Employers understand the nature of these qualifications and they are all considered relevant to various levels of employment.

The Government policy is to encourage learners to attain qualifications of relevance to the labour market which also provide opportunities for transfer and progression in the higher education system. It is not the aim of the Government to seek to encourage either entry to the labour market or progression to further learning on an absolute basis.

Latest available data -

	U/G courses	Gained Employment	Further Study	Seeking Employment
2003	**Degrees**	56%	34%	3%
	Cert/Diplomas	23%	74%	3%
2004	**Degrees**	56%	33%	3%
	Cert/Diplomas	32%	63%	3%

QUALITY ASSURANCE

12. To what extend is your national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

Please include –
Stage of implementation of national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
Any action that has been taken to ensure that of national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
Any deadlines set for taking action to ensure that of national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
Any action planned to ensure that of national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

There are three separate, but linked, systems for quality assurance in Irish higher education in place for each of the following:

- The universities and associated colleges
- The Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the associated institutes of technology and providers within the independent sector
- The Dublin Institute of Technology

In 2004 Irish stakeholders established the Irish Higher Education Quality Network to:

- Provide a forum for discussion of quality assurance issues amongst the principal national stakeholders involved in the quality assurance of higher education and training in Ireland

- Provide a forum for the dissemination of best practice in quality assurance amongst practitioners and policy makers involved in the Irish higher education and training sector

- Endeavour, where appropriate, to develop common national principles and approaches to quality assurance in Irish higher education and training.

The membership consists of the principal stakeholders - practitioners, policy makers and students - involved in quality assurance in Irish higher education and training, as set out below:

- Union of Students in Ireland

- Irish Universities Quality Board

- Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology

- Irish Universities Association

- Dublin Institute of Technology

- Higher Education Colleges Association

- Higher Education Authority

- Higher Education and Training Awards Council

- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

- Department of Education and Science

The Network reviewed the legislative requirements and procedures for quality assurance for the different institutions in the Irish higher education sector and in May 2005 identified a set of common underpinning principles of Good Practice The principles are agreed by the Network as consonant with the legislative arrangements that govern quality assurance in the Irish Higher Education sector, and as conforming to the principles outlined in the Berlin Communiqué, and to the 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area', as developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in co-operation with the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) and as adopted by Ministers at Bergen in May 2005. The principles are available here:
http://www.iheqn.ie/_fileupload/publications/File808en.doc

The Irish Universities Quality Board was established in 2002 by decision of the governing authorities of the Irish Universities and became a separate legal entity in February 2006.

   o   to increase the level of inter-university co-operation in developing their quality

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assurance procedures and processes, in line with best international systems

- o in representing their approach nationally and internationally as a unique quality model appropriate to the needs of the Irish Universities

- o to facilitate the conduct of reviews of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures and their outcomes

The Irish Universities Quality Board is in the process of updating the Framework for Quality in Irish Universities and this will include the formal incorporation of the European Standards and Guidelines. This is to be completed by the end of December 2006. This information is available here: www.iuqb.ie. In December 2006, the Higher Education Authority agreed to the request from IUQB to commission an external review of IUQB which will incorporate the extent to which IUQB complies with the European Standards and Guidelines.

The Higher Education and Training Awards Council has incorporated the European Standards and Guidelines in its policies and criteria for setting the standards of awards, for making awards, for delegating authority to make awards and for quality assurance. Furthermore, in July 2006, a review of the performance by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council of its functions, incorporating the extent to which the Council complies with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, was completed by the Qualifications Authority. This information is available here: http://www.nqai.ie/en/Review/ and here http://www.hetac.ie/publications.cfm?sID=10. HETAC is the first European agency to meet the European Standards and Guidelines.

The Dublin Institute of Technology has incorporated the European Standards and Guideliens into its quality assurance procedures. In June 2006, a review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the Institute was completed by the European University Association, on behalf of the Qualifications Authority. This information is available here: http://www.nqai.ie/en/PoliciesandProcedures/.

A review of the Qualifications Authority which incorproates, inter alia, its compliance with European Standards and Guidelines commenced in November 2006.

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13. Describe the Quality Assurance system operating in your country.

Stage of implementation of external QA system
Scope of external QA system – does it cover all higher education
Which of the following elements are included in external QA system –
- *Internal assessment*
- *External review*
- *Publication of results*
Whether procedures have been established for peer review of the national agencies according to the standards of QA in the EHEA

There are three separate, but linked, systems for quality assurance in Irish higher education in place for each of the following:
- The universities and associated colleges
- The Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the associated institutes of technology and providers within the independent sector
- The Dublin Institute of Technology

In 2004 Irish stakeholders established the Irish Higher Education Quality Network and this is detailed above.

The Network reviewed the legislative requirements and procedures for quality assurance for the different institutions in the Irish higher education sector and in May 2005 identified a set of common underpinning principles of Good Practice The principles are available here:
http://www.iheqn.ie/_fileupload/publications/File808en.doc

The principles incorporate the arrangements in each of the three separate, but linked, systems for quality assurance in Irish higher education for:
- *Internal assessment*
- *External review*
- *Publication of results*

These elements are statutory requirements in the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999

14.Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance

(Include whether students are included in –
- *Governance of QA agencies*
- *As full members or observers of external review teams*
- *As part of the decision making process for external reviews*
- *In the consultation process during external reviews*

Students nominate/elect members to the Governing Bodies of Higher Education institutions established in statute, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB).

Student involvement is also a key part of the quality assurance procedures of third-level institutions. These elements are statutory requirements in the Univerisities Act 1997 and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. In addition, stakeholders are working together in the Irish Higher Education Quality Network to seek to deepen the extent of student engagement in the implementation of quality assurance procedeures in higher education and a sub-group has been established to lead this work.

HETAC has ensured that there is a student perspective in the membership of its review teams, such as in the delegation of authority to make awards evaluation and committee representation for the Programme Accreditation Committee.

Those with a student perspective were also included in the teams appointed by the Qualifications Authority to review HETAC and the DIT, and in the High level Reference Panel which had an over-seeing role in the context of the HEA/IUQB commissioned review of QA processes in the university sector, which was carried out by the EUA.

15.Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance

(Include whether international participants are included in –
- *Governance of QA agencies*
- *As full members or observers of external review teams*
- *As part of the decision making process for external reviews*
- *In the consultation process during external reviews*

International experts are required to be among the members of HETAC, the Qualifications Authority

and the Irish Universities Quality Board. International experts are among the nominees of the Minister for Education and Science to the membership of the Higher Education Authority.

There is a legislative requirement for international experts are legislatively required to be a member of all the external quality assurance reviews undertaken by higher education institutions themselves and this requirement has been implemented. This is also underpinned in the Common Underpinning Principles of Good Practice established by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network and referred to above.

International expert peers are included in all quality assurance and other accreditation activities of HETAC. HETAC has engaged over twenty five international peers to participate in programme accreditation, delegated authority (institutional accreditation), research accreditation and quality assurance activities, in the past eighteen months. HETAC currently holds the secretariat for INQAAHE - International Network For Quality Assurance Agencies In Higher Education. The chief executive of HETAC is currently vice president of ENQA – the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The Council is a member of the European Consortium For Accreditation (ECA) and the Joint Quality Initiative .

The Qualifications Authority has involved international experts in the teams appointed to review HETAC and the DIT. The Authority is also a member of the Joint Quality Initiative.

The HEA/IUQB joint review of the effectiveness of QA procedures in the universities was undertaken by the European University Association, and all the teams consisted of teams of international experts from Europe and North America.

RECOGNITION OF DEGREES AND PERIODS OF STUDY

16. **DESCRIBE THE STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT IN YOU COUNTRY**

PLEASE INCLUDE % OF STUDENTS GRADUATING IN 2007 WHO WILL RECEIVE IT WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY –
- ISSUED IN A WIDELY SPOKEN EU LANGUAGE
- FREE OF CHARGE
- AUTOMATICALLY
- CORRESPOND TO THE EU/COE/UNESCO DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT FORMAT

The Diploma Supplement was introduced on a national basis in 2005. In the case of those institutions outside the university sector, the DS is issued in English automatically and free of charge to all graduates. Five of the universities issue Diploma Supplements automatically to all graduates. One of the five universities issues the Diploma Supplement in secure digital format.Two other universities have not yet commenced`but are preparing a pilot project. The Diploma Supplement is available to students who request it. A project has been initiated to make it available to all students, automatically and free of charge from 2007.

The deployment (including any modifications to text etc) of the DS is overseen a National Steering Group comprised of all stakeholders in higher education. The national EUROPASS centre (within the Qualifications Authority) also plays a critical role in promoting the DS.

The aim is that all students graduating in 2007 will receive the Diploma Supplement.

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents of the Lisbon recognition Convention.

Whether your country has ratified the Convention
All appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework
Which of the following principles has applied in practice –
- *Applicants right to a fair assessment*
- *Recognition if no substantial difference can be proven*
- *Demonstration of substantial differences where recognition is not granted*
- *Provision of information of your countries HE programmes and institutions*

Whether you have a fully operational ENIC
Any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and later supplementary documents

Ireland has ratified the Lisbon Convention in March 2004.

All appropriate legislation complies with the legal Framework.

An integrated national policy approach to the recognition of international qualifications in Ireland has been established by the NQAI in consultation with stakeholders. The Authority is the Irish centre for the recognition of international awards, and represents Ireland in a European Network of centres known as ENIC/NARIC (European National Information Centre/National Academic Recognition Information Centre) and NRP (National Reference Point) which promote the recognition of international awards throughout Europe.

The Authority co-operates with stakeholders in implementing the national approach through its implementation advisory group. A national conference was held in April 2006 and documentation has been circulated to all higher education institutions in relation to the implementation of the Convention.

The work being undertaken to develop a national action plan on recognition has involved meeting with each higher education institution to be updated on implementation arrangements and to seek to further encourage implementation.

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country

Please include –

- *Stage of implementation in 2006/07 academic year*
- *The % of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in 2006/07 academic year*
- *How any other system of credit accumulation relates to ECTS, is it compatible to ECTS, what is the ration between national and ECTS credits*

Following the establishment of the Irish National Framework of Qualification, the Qualifiations Authority – in partnership with education and training stakeholders, through its Technical Advisory Group on Credit – has been working towards the development of a national approach to credit. A twin track approach has been pursued (one for further education and training, the other for higher education and training) because, at this juncture, the way forward on credit is more clearly signposted for higher education and training within the context of the Bologna process and the general acceptance and use of ECTS. Adopting a consultative and developmental approach, and having

considered the domestic and international contexts of the credit agenda, the Authority's Technical Advisory Group on Credit (Higher Education Track) has now produced a set of 'Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish higher education and training'. These 'Principles and operational guidelines' have been adopted by the Authority. The operational guidelines recommend that a typical credit volume or credit range be established for each major award-type from levels 6-9 in the Framework in line with existing ECTS conventions and current practice in the Irish higher education system as follows:

Level 6 Higher Certificate	=	120 credits
Level 7 Ordinary Bachelor Degree	=	180 credits
Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree	=	180-240 credits
Level 8 Higher Diploma	=	60 credits
Level 9 Masters Degree (Taught)	=	60-120 credits
Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma	=	60 credits

Irish Doctoral Degrees and Masters Degrees (by research) do not usually have credit values assigned. However, Masters Degrees (by research) typically have a 2 year duration which would equate with an appropriate number of credits. Also emerging practice on professional doctorates provide for a typical model of 180 credits.

All Irish higher education awarding bodies are operating within these arrangements. The Principles and operational guidelines are available here: http://www.nqai.ie/en/Publications/File1,843,en.doc

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications[1]? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

The Qualifications Authority has developed a National Action Plan which was published in December 2006.

The work being undertaken to develop this national action plan on recognition has involved meeting with each higher education institution to be updated on implementation arrangements and to seek to further encourage further implementation.

Lifelong Learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

> Please include:
> - the stage of development of any procedures or national guidelines to recognise prior learning
> - a description of any procedures or national guidelines for assessing prior learning as a basis for access to HE
> - a description of any procedures or national guidelines for allocating credits as a basis of exemption from some programme requirements.

In June 2005, the Qualifications Authority with the assistance of its Advisory Group on the

Recognition of Prior Learning, adopted Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training. The purposes of the recognition of prior learning are defined as to provide:

- entry to a programme leading to an award
- credit towards an award or exemption from some programme requirements
- eligibility for a full award

The principles for the recognition of prior learning are addressed to education and training providers, awarding bodies, and those in the workplace. The principles are available to those who are developing systems of recognition of prior learning and to those who wish to make use of the prior learning that has been recognised by other providers or awarding bodies. The intention is that the guidelines will give an exemplar of the nature of the arrangements that further and higher education and training awarding bodies and providers (the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology) should consider putting in place. For more details see here:
http://www.nqai.ie/en/LatestNews/File,823,en.doc

Implementation is being encouraged and facilitated by the Qualifications Authority. This work is also linking into the implementation of the OECD work on the recognition of non-formal and in-formal learning and credit transfer. A national review is to be undertaken as part of the OECD process.

An example of developments that have taken place is that HETAC is putting in place processes for the making of awards on the basis of the accreditation of learning outcomes already attained. A Doctoral degree and a Masters degree have been awarded by HETAC following such a process.

A further example is that in UL a policy on the recognition of prior learning has been approved by Academic Council. RPL shall be used for the following purposes at the University of Limerick:

- to enable applicants to gain entry to a programme of the university;
- to award credits for part of a programme of study;
- to award exemptions for some programme requirements;

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21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

Please include:
- any flexibility in entry requirements
- any flexible delivery methods
- any modular structures of programmes.

The functions set out in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 define a key, pivotal role for the NQAI in the process of the promotion of lifelong learning, and particularly in the promotion and facilitation of access, transfer and progression. The development and establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications is set in the context of a vision for the recognition of learning and is in line with the broad national and European policy of promoting a lifelong learning society.

The Authority has defined specific policies, actions and procedures through which it will meet its objectives in relation to access, transfer and progression. They are set out under four themes:

- credit
- transfer and progression routes
- entry arrangements
- information provision.

Higher education institutions are implementing these. An example of developments is the enhanced opportunity for holder of FETAC awards to enter under-graduate programmes, particularly in the institutes of technology.

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education was established within the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in August 2003. The National Office facilitates educational access and opportunity for groups who are under-represented in higher education - those who are disadvantaged socially, economically and/or culturally, those with a disability and mature learners. It also encourages flexible delivery opportunities.

Modular structures are supported by the implementation of arrangements for credit accumulation and transfer set out above.

Joint Degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Please include:
- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes
- whether joint[2] degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes

Under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) may establish agreements with other awarding bodies for the purposes of making joint awards. HETAC has completed five such agreements since the Bergen meeting. A number of additional proposals are being considered. In 2005, HETAC published its policy and criteria for making joint awards, joint accreditation and accreditation of jointly provided programmes.

In a small number of cases the DIT has agreed joint awards for programmes, including one agreement with Harbin Institute of Technology, China.

Joint awards are not yet made in the university sector. The National University of Ireland has recently agreed (November 2006) that it can make joint awards with other institutions and has processed a change of statute to this effect.

There are however many examples of joint programmes, with other Irish, European and international partner institutions. Some of the joint programmes lead to dual awards, or to a single award with an additional certificate outlining the joint nature of the programme. A number of Irish universities are members of Erasmus Mundus and other joint programme consortia and have been making such awarding arrangements for several years.

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C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

The National Development Plan (2000 – 2006) provided for an investment of some €2.5 billion for the development of institutional research capacity and strategically orientated basic research. Part of the provision included some €605million for a dedicated Programme of Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI). The objectives of the Programme are

(i)   facilitation of the strategic development of institutional research capabilities (infrastructural and programmatic),
(ii)   enhancement of the numbers, quality and relevance of graduate output and
(iii)   support of high quality inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional research.

Funding is also provided for programmes operated by the two Research Councils – the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences and the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology.

In addition to this, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) planned an investment of €646 million between 2000-2006 in academic researchers and research teams to generate new knowledge, leading edge technologies, and competitive enterprises in the fields underpinning the two key strategic areas of biotechnology and information and communications technology.

There are a number of other research agencies with specific remits in areas such as the health sciences, environment, marine and agriculture. While these may have their own research facilities, it should be noted that some 80% of all publically funded research is conducted in higher education institutions.

In June 2006 the Government approved the publication of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI) and committed additional resources to allow implementation of the Strategy to commence.The full implementation of the Strategy has been costed at €3.8 billion.

Key Actions arising from SSTI

- Build on recent NDP investments to deliver a sustainable, world class research system across the spectrum of humanities, physical and social sciences;
- Deliver quality by increasing the number of research teams led by internationallycompetitive principal investigators;
- Upgrade existing infrastructure and develop new facilities to support research;
- Enhance postgraduate skills through a graduate schools mechanism;
- Develop sustainable career paths for researchers;
- Enhance the mobility of researchers;
- Double the number of PhD graduates by 2013;

This Strategy has been prepared on the basis of a whole of Government approach to focus on research and development in our third level institutions and in the Enterprise sector. This integrated approach will ensure that we have ambitious and coordinated actions on all fronts – while ensuring that key national targets are met.

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

57% of those who graduated with a PhD in 2004 were employed in third level education; although we cannot identify the percentages who are working in research, we can assume that the majority are now pursuing postdoctoral research.

Human resources, in the form of sufficient numbers of suitably educated, high quality people, are essential to the achievement of the objectives for the research base. This has implications both for education at all levels up to and including undergraduate (to ensure a 'pipeline' of people interested in and qualified for a career in science or engineering) as well as for the country's ability to attract mobile international research talent. One factor which impinges on both these issues is the availability of an attractive career structure for people interested in doing research. The development of more visible career paths will make science more attractive.

The recent five fold increase in national investment in research, together with the progress that has been made towards the development of a state of the art infrastructure and the growing integration of higher education research with enterprise and sectoral research, provide the foundations to differentiate Ireland as a highly stimulating place to conduct research.

Under the Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation we therefore need to further differentiate Ireland by developing attractive research career paths. In addition, this strategy places a heavy emphasis on growing business expenditure on R&D. As well as building strong HE based research teams, the movement of researchers from the HE sector to industry and the growth of collaboration between companies and research institutions through the development of industry led networks and competence centres are priorities.

The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

Please include:
- any financial or other measures to widen access in higher education amongst socially disadvantaged groups
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to widen access to higher education, including results if possible
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the widening access measures already in place.

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was established on a statutory basis, under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 on 26th February, 2001. The two principal tasks of the Authority are to establish and maintain a national framework of qualifications to promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression. Detailed policies actions and procedures on the facilitation of access transfer and progression has been published and higher education institutions are realigning their policies and procedures to facilitate these new requirements.

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education was established within the Higher

Education Authority (HEA) in August 2003. The National Office facilitates educational access and opportunity for groups who are under-represented in higher education - those who are disadvantaged socially, economically and/or culturally, those with a disability and mature learners. The role of this office is to co-ordinate policy and practice, allocate funding and monitor progress in achieving equity of access to higher education for these under-represented groups.

In 2004 the HEA National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education conducted an initial review of HEA targeted initiatives to higher education (*Towards A National Strategy – Initial Review of HEA Targeted Initiatives to Widen Access to Higher Education*, HEA, October 2004). This review documented the range of access activities and infrastructure which have been developed for socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers.

In December 2004 the National Office published a three-year Action Plan Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland *(National Action Plan 2005-2007, Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education,* HEA, December 2004*)*. The Action Plan identified six goals and associated actions to achieve equity of access to higher education including - the establishment of a national framework of policies and initiatives to widen access under-pinning the development of expanded links and partnerships between under-represented groups communities and learners and all higher education institutions; new and expanded routes of access and progression, in particular from further education and training and community education and the development of broader teaching and learning strategies in higher education so that the needs of a more diverse student body are met.

Monitoring the impact of policies to widen access
The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education periodically carries out reviews of policies and practices to widen access to higher education.

In October 2005, the National Office carried out a review of funding measures to support access to higher education (*Progressing the Action Plan: Funding to Achieve Equity of Access to Higher Education,* HEA, 2004) - recommendations included - comprehensive and accessible information on financial support should be made available to students, parents and communities, through development of the existing booklet and a range of other formats; a comprehensive study should be made on the cost of going to college for students from diverse backgrounds and a model for a regionally-based service should be developed to ensure that all students enrolling in higher or further education have access to a needs assessment service.

In September 2006, the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education carried out an evaluation of access programmes in all higher education institutions in Ireland. The evaluation proposes a framework for successful access programmes based on four criteria: policy, targeting, partnership and practice. It also identifies specific examples of good practice in the structure and content of existing access programmes.

The universities and Institutes of Technology also have a number of programmes in place to encourage and facilitate access to higher education from these target groups. These include a direct access scheme for socio-economic disadvantaged school-leavers to gain access to high-demand subject areas where there is significant competition among school leavers.

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to

their social or economic background.

Please include:
- any guidance or counselling services and any other measures to improve retention
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of polices to improve retention, including results if possible
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the retention measures already in place.

The Student Support Schemes, administered by the Local Authorities and the Vocational Education Committees (Awarding Bodies) under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science, offer financial assistance to eligible students attending approved further and higher education courses. Students entering approved courses for the first time are, generally speaking, eligible for grants where they satisfy the relevant conditions as to age, residence, means, nationality and previous academic attainment.

Rate of Grant

Grants are paid at :-
- The non-adjacent rate, where the grant-holder's normal residence is more than 15 miles from the college attended. With effect from the 1999/00 academic year all eligible mature students have received the non-adjacent rate of grant.
- The adjacent rate, where the grant-holder's normal residence is 15 miles or less from the college attended.

The Higher Education Grant scheme also includes funding for students eligible for the "Top-up" grants which are a higher level of grant to students from families on low incomes. The "Back to Education Allowance" is a scheme for unemployed people who are getting certain payments from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and can continue to receive the allowance on taking up approved third level courses of education.

Disability officers are employed in every publicly funded higher-level institution in Ireland. The role of the disability officer is to ensure that students with a disability are empowered to fully participate in university life, both academically and socially.

Activities to widen access for mature students are well established in many higher education institutions. Many institutions employ a mature student officer, and initiatives to widen access include introductory and foundation courses, information and counselling, learning support, and careers preparation.

RETENTION

The universities all have guidance and counselling facilities in place offering a range of services to students of all backgrounds. Many of these services are specifically tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable learners who are at risk of dropping out of education for a variety of reasons.

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Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:
- any measures to increase inward student mobility
- any measures to increase outward student mobility.

The Student Support Schemes, administered by the Local Authorities and the Vocational Education Committees (Awarding Bodies) under the aegis of the Department, offer financial assistance to eligible students attending approved further and higher education courses. Legislation is to be enacted to introduce a single unified scheme of maintenance grants for students in higher education. This will provide for a more coherent administration system which will facilitate consistency of application and improved client accessibility and ensure the timely delivery of grants to those who need them most.

Students entering approved courses for the first time are, generally speaking, eligible for grants where they satisfy the relevant conditions as to age, residence, means, nationality and previous academic attainment.

An approved undergraduate course for the purposes of the third-level grants schemes includes a full-time undergraduate course of not less than two years duration pursued in a university or third-level institution which is maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from public funds in another EU member state.

Under the means-tested third-level schemes, grant-holders who are required, as part of their approved course, to attend foreign university courses for a period of up to one year may continue to receive grant assistance provided the period abroad does not affect the normal duration of the approved course. In such cases any grantholder in receipt of the adjacent rate of grant will be paid the non-adjacent rate or higher rate of grant for the duration of his/her study abroad.

On condition that they meet the residency and other requirements of the scheme and are pursuing an approved undergraduate course for the purposes of the schemes, EU-employees and their children may be eligible for grant assistance in respect of study in another EU country subject, in the same way as all other candidates.

The third-level maintenance grant schemes do not extend to postgraduate courses outside of Ireland. However, tax relief at the standard rate is available in respect of approved full/part-time undergraduate **and postgraduate courses** in both private and publicly funded third-level colleges in EU member states and in non-EU states for **postgraduate courses.**

In addition to the above, the Department of Education and Science make a number of awards each year under merit based scholarships schemes. These are based on results received in the Leaving Certificate Examination and are redeemable by students pursuing both full-time courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level in approved institutions in other EU Member States as well as in Ireland. In addition, the Department of Education and Science offers a number of scholarships for Irish students to the European University Institute, Florence. Candidates are required to have a good honours primary degree and good knowledge of at least two of the Institute's working languages, namely Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish.

Tax Relief
Section 473A, Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 provides for tax relief on third level tuition fees, at the

standard rates in respect of approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including certain approved undergraduate courses in any EU Member State, and postgraduate courses in any EU and non-EU member states.

The universities and institutes of technology have been active in encouraging inward mobility at both undergraduate and postgraduate level to Irish higher education, and inward mobility continues to grow rapidly. It has traditionally however been more difficult to increase outward mobility, and a number of institutions have taken a pro-active approach to encouraging greater participation in European exchange programmes such as Erasmus.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

See answers to question 27 above.

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

　　Please include:
- any measures to increase inward staff mobility
- any measures to increase outward staff mobility.

The HEA, as the National Agency for Socrates/Erasmus, published an external review of Erasmus Teacher Mobility. It is hoped that the issues identified in this report will help to improve teacher mobility.

The main factors influencing teacher mobility under the Erasmus programme are:

- Duration of visit and the need to provide substitution teaching while away.
- Lack of recognition of teaching period for recruitment and promotion purposes.
- Funding available

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

Ireland is playing an active role in the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area:

Irish higher education institutions, in cooperation with relevant government agencies, are attracting increasing numbers of non-EU students to Ireland at all academic levels. Irish institutions are also recruiting staff on an international basis. Irish institutions participate in EU education fairs in Asia and other regions, as well as in other major education fairs across the globe. The marketing of Irish

higher education benefits from the increasing coherence of the European Higher Education Area and the other opportunities a more open Europe can bring to both staff and students.

HETAC and HEA are members of ENQA, with the NQAI as an associate member. IUQB attends all ENQA workshops and general assemblies at the invitation of the HEA.

HETAC is a member of the European Consortium of Accreditation (ECA), a consortium of accreditation agencies working actively on the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions between the various member countries. In addition HETAC provides the Secretariat of the International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

The HEA has organised a number of seminars on behalf of Bologna promoters. HETAC on behalf of the Department of Education and Science has organised a number of Bologna seminars on the Diploma Supplement and label, ECTS, ECTS label. Institutions and groups of institutions also hold regular seminars and workshops, e.g., the Higher Education Colleges Association hosted a workshop in September 2006.

The Department of Education and Science has co-ordinated the implementation of the Diploma Supplement through the development of a National Template. This document is now being cited as an example of good practice

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland participates in the ENIC/NARIC networks

Finally, representatives of many Irish Higher Education Institutions have participated in European projects, including Tuning etc

31. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country.

Ireland has been very good at the development of coherent policies at national level in line with the Bologna agenda and this is reflected in this national report. The main challenge in implementing all of the elements of the Bologna process is to encourage and deepen implementation of change at the institutional level

IRISH *BOLOGNA SCORECARD 2007*

Degree system		
1	Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	**Green**
2	Access to the next cycle	**Green**
3	Implementation of national qualifications framework	**Green**
Quality assurance		
4	National implementation of Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA	**Green**
5	Stage of development of external quality assurance system	**Green**
6 a **6 b**	Level of student participation Level of international participation	**Light Green** **Green**
Recognition of degrees and study periods		
7	Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	**Green**
8	National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	**Green**
9	Stage of implementation of ECTS	**Green**
Lifelong learning		
10	Recognition of prior learning	**Yellow**
Joint Degrees		
11	Establishment and recognition of joint degrees	**Light Green**