

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Third Level (22 November 2012)

The Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn T.D., announces the establishment of a National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at third level. The National Forum will have a central focus on enhancing the quality of the learning experience for all students, be they full-time, part-time or flexible learners. It will have a vital role to play in supporting excellence in teaching and learning across all higher education institutions. These goals are in line with key objectives outlined on teaching and learning in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Hunt report).

Addressing the heads of Higher Education institutions at a conference in the Department in Dublin this morning, Minister Quinn said, “The focus of the Forum will be to provide a platform for the support of implementing the best practices in teaching and learning that are already underway in many of our institutions. We now want to scale up this good work so that across the higher education sector we enhance teaching and improve learning for all.”

Tom Boland, Chief Executive of the HEA, said, “We are confident that the Forum will transform the quality and accessibility of academic professional development and in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In turn, this will enhance the student experience in Irish higher education.” The National Forum will strive towards ensuring that all students have the best environment in which to learn and academics have the tools to provide excellence in teaching.

Organisational Structure & Governance

The National Forum comprises an International Advisory Panel, an Academic Assembly, an Executive, and working groups, as well as a Management Board, which will be the key decision-making body of the National Forum. The Management Board will comprise nominees from the IUA (3), IOTU (3), HEA/DES (3), QQI (1), USI (1) plus a Chairperson. The inaugural Chairperson will be Professor Sarah Moore, Associate Vice President Academic at the University of Limerick.

Key Objectives

The National Forum will advance national strategic objectives in the area of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. In the immediate future, it will focus on addressing the national priorities detailed in the National Strategy, including:

- (i) The enhancement of engagement with innovative pedagogies and with the technologies that support these;
 - (ii) The enhancement of the first-year student experience;
 - (iii) Enhanced flexibility in the delivery of higher education programmes;
- and
- (iv) The enhancement of students’ proficiency in mathematics and science.

In addressing national priorities, the National Forum will aim to enhance the quality of teaching practice and student learning across the sector.

Key Functions

1. To establish and maintain a string evidence-base for the advancement of national strategic priorities in teaching and learning in higher education.
2. To identify key priority themes.
3. To operate a national teaching fellowship scheme and a national teaching award scheme.
4. To operate a national grants scheme.
5. To facilitate Academic Professional Development.
6. To establish a national digital platform.

Key Outputs

1. The establishment of a national digital platform.
2. The development of a professional standards framework.
3. The operation of a national fellowship scheme.
4. The operation of a national grants scheme.
5. The operation of a national awards scheme.
6. Hosting an annual conference.
7. The production and dissemination of research, scholarship and resources in teaching and learning.
8. Provide an enhanced evidence-base for policy-making and quality assurance in teaching and learning at institutional and national levels.

Funding

The National Forum will receive €500 from the final 2012 SIF allocation and will receive base-line funding of €700 per annum formerly invested in the NDLR in each of the next three years to cover both pay and non-pay costs.