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Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas

ACHIEVING EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND | **ACTION PLAN 2005-2007**

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FOREWORD

I welcome this first action plan from the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in the Higher Education Authority. The plan sets out a vision and practical framework of actions for the National Office and its education partners over the next three years.

Equity of access must be an integral feature of our higher education system if that system is to deliver for individuals, society and the economy. We have experienced fundamental changes in our expectations of the opportunities education should provide to learners. There is now general agreement that individuals should be able to enter and successfully participate in higher education, regardless of social, economic or cultural background. This aspiration, however, has yet to be fully realised.

This plan sets out the rationale behind equity of access and the practical steps that are required to create this opportunity for groups who have, to date, been under-represented in higher education. These include learners with a disability, mature students, disadvantaged school leavers and members of the traveller community and ethnic minorities. Effective implementation of the plan will mean that these groups are enabled and encouraged to enter, and successfully participate in, higher education.

The action plan was drawn up by the National Office with the assistance of an advisory group and with the help of a range of education and social partners. I know that many people and organisations have expressed their support for, and commitment to achieving, the agenda now set out. The achievement of equality of educational opportunity is a policy priority for the Government. With this plan we can significantly advance that agenda.

Mary Hanafin, TD
Minister for Education and Science

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a modern democracy, Ireland aspires to having an equitable education system that provides opportunities to learners throughout their lives to reach their full potential as individuals and as members of a society and economy. Achieving equity of access to higher education is central to realising this goal, and the higher education sector occupies a key position of leadership in progressing this task.

So far in Ireland, we have had mixed results in our efforts to eliminate social exclusion and inequity, in particular in our education system. Participation in higher education has grown significantly over the past 40 years but has not been shared equally by all members of our society. People with a disability, socio-economically disadvantaged students, members of the traveller community, ethnic minorities and mature students remain under-represented in higher education.

The need to achieve equity of access to higher education is not particular to Ireland. Countries throughout the developed world are at various stages of progress in this area, and many OECD countries share the need for sustained and co-ordinated investment of resources to tackle educational disadvantage, change the culture of higher education institutions and create mechanisms for gathering comprehensive data to set progressive targets and practical indicators of progress.

Success in six practical goals will ensure significant progress in achieving equity of access to higher education in Ireland. The first is to articulate and communicate the reasons why equity of access and educational opportunity are such an important part of our development as a society and economy. The second is to establish a national framework of policies and initiatives to widen access in order to create new partnerships, link all under-represented learners to at least one higher educational institution and ensure that achieving equity of access is central to the agenda of higher education institutions. The third goal is to create new and expanded routes of access to higher education, in particular from further education and training and community education,

and to broaden the opportunities for learners of all backgrounds and identities to progress to higher education.

The fourth goal is to develop more diverse teaching and learning strategies in higher education so that the needs of a more inclusive student population are met and everybody has the opportunity to reach their full potential. The fifth goal aims to ensure adequate financial support and resources for learners, communities and education providers. The sixth goal is to develop a robust and equitable evaluation framework for widening access policies and initiatives so that indicators of progress are agreed and set and the necessary resources are secured and allocated effectively. Each goal is accompanied by action points that spell out the steps required for success.

Use of quantitative and qualitative targets to achieve equity of access are essential for successful implementation of the action plan; these will be set and developed for each under-represented group and will be based on improved systems of data collection. An implementation strategy and timetable set out the work plan over the next three years and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The success of the plan is dependent on effective collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders, including educational practitioners, policy makers and social partners locally and nationally. The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education and the HEA look forward to co-ordinating the effort and commitment of all those involved in this vital task of achieving equitable access to higher education.

INTRODUCTION

This document presents a national action plan to achieve equity of access to higher education in Ireland. Subject to approval by the Minister for Education and Science, the plan will be implemented by the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education within the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The National Office was established in August 2003 following a decision by the Minister for Education and Science, Mr Noel Dempsey TD. The office oversees policy and practice in educational access and opportunity for learners who are under-represented in higher education – those with a disability, socio-economically disadvantaged learners, those from the traveller community and ethnic minorities, and mature students. The National Office works with the institutes of technology, the universities and all other publicly funded institutions offering higher education programmes.

Between 2005–2007, the National Office will work with learners, education providers, agencies and social partners to achieve the goals set out in this plan and make significant progress in achieving equity of access to higher education.

Part 1 of the document provides a national and international context for equity of educational opportunity and access.

Part 2 presents a vision for the national plan.

Part 3 presents the goals and action points that underpin the plan and the work of the National Office.

Part 4 sets out plans for quantitative targets for each of the under-represented groups in higher education.

Part 5 addresses the issue of resources to achieve equity of access to higher education.

Part 6 provides a summary of the implementation strategy and timetable for the plan.

Any comments on the national plan or on any aspect of work to achieve equity of access to higher education in Ireland are most welcome and can be sent to: access@hea.ie.

1 CONTEXT

1.1 NATIONAL

By any reckoning, Ireland has made significant strides in achieving peace and prosperity for its citizens since independence. Over the past fifteen years in particular, we have enjoyed considerable economic success and improvement in the quality of life for many. Notwithstanding this achievement, we cannot afford to be complacent about our progress to date. We claim to be a democracy with a central ideal of equality for all members of society; so far, we have had mixed results in our efforts to eliminate social exclusion and inequality, in particular in our education system. An equitable education system is a well-established and essential means of achieving social inclusion and equity and is a cornerstone of a democratic country. Since the introduction of free second level education in the late 1960s we have had significant expansion in participation in education, including higher education. That participation has not, however, been shared equally by all sections of our society. A range of surveys and reports over the past two decades show us that inequity of access and participation remain as unacceptable and anti-democratic features of our education system. Each year over 4,000 eleven–to–fifteen year–olds drop out of school before reaching the Junior Certificate. Over 750,000 adults in Ireland between 25–64 years of age have little or no formal educational qualifications. In some urban areas, fewer than 2% of eligible young people and adults progress to higher education. Students in our higher education institutions continue to be predominantly from the middle and higher income groups. The number of students with a disability participating in higher education is still considerably under-represented in comparison to our overall population, and members of the Traveller community participating in higher education remain a tiny minority.

In common with most other developed countries, we now have a diverse cultural society and, increasingly, a much better understanding of the needs of people with different identities, backgrounds and abilities. An educational system that reflects that diversity is essential.

An equitable, accessible education system also provides significant benefits for the economy. Over the past twenty-five years in particular, Ireland has aimed for economic progress and higher living standards for society as a whole, based on enhanced skills and productivity. There is substantial evidence to show that an educated population is a key advantage in today's competitive world and has been an important factor in the success to date of the Irish economy (HEA, 1999; Forfás, 2000; Enterprise Strategy Group, 2004). Successive OECD *Education at a Glance* reports show that there is a strong positive link between educational attainment and personal earning potential.

National policy and resources

Tackling social exclusion through education, achieving equity of educational opportunity, establishing lifelong learning routes and encouraging access to and successful participation in higher education have all been national policy priorities in Ireland since the mid-1990s. Three Government White Papers on education and a range of key policy documents and legislation have underlined the commitment of the state to achieving these policy goals. Since 1996, we have been committed to developing lifelong learning as a core element of our education system, and the White Paper on Adult Education, *Learning for Life* (2000), reinforced this priority.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, passed in 1999, places a new emphasis on meeting the needs of learners and also provides a national framework of qualifications. This framework, which was launched in 2003, creates a new impetus for partnership and coherent links between second level, further education and higher education. Legislation for persons with particular educational needs has recently been passed which will ensure that children with a disability reach their full educational potential through the pre-primary, primary and second level systems. In a broader context, the 1998 Employment Equality Act and the 2000 Equal Status Act seek to ensure that discrimination does not occur within our social and employment structures and practices.

In addition to these new developments, resources devoted to eliminating educational disadvantage and early school leaving and to promoting equity of access and opportunity across the education system include over €450m each year on programmes at pre-primary, primary and second level. In higher education, €100m is spent annually on higher education grant schemes and a further €23m on financial support for students and access programmes in further and higher education.

The need for an action plan

Despite these policy and resource commitments, a number of recent reports have highlighted the extent to which efforts to widen access to education have been only partially successful. A coherent educational or philosophical rationale has not underpinned this work, and practitioners and institutions have tended to operate in isolation and without an overall national policy to guide their work. While a lot of resources are being invested, policy advisers and evaluators have identified the need for a strategy that can develop a framework for equity of access and clarity of purpose and direction in our efforts (Osborne and Leith, 2000; Skilbeck and Connell, 2000; Skilbeck, 2001; Action Group 2001; Equality Review Team to the HEA, 2004). There are indications that we are not using our human, infrastructural and financial resources to greatest effect. The lack of adequate data and practical indicators of progress impedes evaluation of interventions. Current arrangements for distribution of available resources are not always equitable. There has been insufficient emphasis on assessing the outcomes of access activities; this assessment must be both quantitative and qualitative, cater for local and national environments, and meet the need for long-term investment in achieving equity of access and social inclusion through education.

We need an action plan that draws together and galvanises policy makers, educators, social partners, parents and learners into transforming our present education system into one that values all members of our society equally, aims to provide the best education for all, makes the ideal of lifelong learning a reality, contributes to economic progress and prosperity, and strengthens our democracy.

The overall purpose and benefits of such a plan have been summed up by Professor Malcolm Skilbeck and Helen Connell in their publication *Access and Equity in Higher Education:*

Widening opportunity for and in higher education has many benefits in strengthening democracy, achieving economic and social progress, advancing human rights, and improving the efficiency, quality and performance of the educational system. These matters are no longer in serious dispute. The task is to concentrate on ways and means, on improving data, evaluation and follow-through. Skilbeck and Connell, 2000, p.24

The plan should articulate a vision for our education system that has equity of educational opportunity, access and outcome as central and valued features, and that meets the needs of learners of diverse backgrounds and identities effectively and inclusively. The plan aims to:

■ clearly articulate the commitment that is required on the part of education providers, policy makers, representative agencies and social partners in realising this vision.

■ map out the ways and means – an agenda for action that includes direction, resources and timing.

■ require policy makers and practitioners at local, regional and national level to collaborate in new and innovative ways.

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education will play a key role in identifying the needs of learners from under-represented groups, co-ordinating and steering the efforts of practitioners and other stakeholders, and facilitating the implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

1.2 INTERNATIONAL

The need to achieve equity of access to higher education and tackle social exclusion through a more equitable education system is not particular to Ireland. Countries throughout the developed world are at various stages of progress in this area and are dealing with socio-cultural circumstances that vary considerably. It is now sixteen years since an Australian White Paper, *Higher Education – A Policy Statement* (Dawkins, 1988), made equity of access to higher education a key policy goal. An important target group was the aboriginal community in Australia; since 1988, participation in higher education by this group has almost tripled from less than 1,500 students to more than to 4,000.

In the United States of America, there is currently a large-scale debate on the merits of affirmative action to widen access to higher education for under-represented groups. In Finland, the positive impact of guidance and counselling for students from lower secondary level onwards is well documented and provides evidence of good practice in promoting and widening access across the education system. In the Netherlands, the impact of a national action plan on lifelong learning is currently being assessed and is shortly to be disseminated internationally.

The OECD has not gathered comprehensive data on equity of access and educational opportunity for several decades; however, there are comparative studies (Osborne and Leith, 2000; HIS Hochschul, 2002) which provide us with an indication of how Ireland is performing in an international context. In common with Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Finland, Sweden and the UK, Ireland's experience shows the clear connection between educational attainment and socio–economic status. Ireland is behind many other OECD countries in access for mature students. In Norway, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand and Australia, 25% of full-time higher education participants are over twenty-five years of age; in Sweden 38% are over twenty-five, whereas the figure in Ireland is less than 6% (OECD, 2003). Similarly, Ireland's record of access for students with disabilities is in need of considerable improvement. The last survey on students with

a disability in higher education in Ireland (1998–9) shows a participation rate of 1.1% in higher education out of a general population of 8% of people with a disability (Census 2002). This compares with participation rates of 9% by students with a disability in higher education in Canada and the United States and 4% in the UK (OECD, 2003; Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2004).

European and international research show that issues and problems arising in efforts to achieve equity of access to higher education are similar to those experienced in Ireland. Many OECD countries share the need for sustained and co-ordinated investment of resources to tackle educational disadvantage and to change the culture of higher education institutions, as well as the need for mechanisms to gather comprehensive data and set progressive targets and practical indicators of progress (Kearney, 2001; Smith, 2001).

Although Ireland's record is reasonable in comparison with other developed countries, we should be more ambitious. We have stated our aim to be among the top rank of OECD countries in the quality of our education system by 2010 (Government of Ireland, 2000). This goal must underpin our commitment to achieve equity of access to higher education.

2 VISION

COLLABORATIVE WORK AND INVESTMENT OF RESOURCES OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS WILL BRING ABOUT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS OF ALL BACKGROUNDS, IDENTITIES AND ABILITIES, AT ALL STAGES IN THEIR LIVES. THERE WILL BE SIGNIFICANT STRIDES TOWARDS A FUTURE IN WHICH MORE DIVERSE LEARNER GROUPS WILL AVAIL OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, IN WHICH SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO ADEQUATELY SUPPORT THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL LEARNERS, AND IN WHICH TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION HAVE DEVELOPED TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

3 GOALS AND ACTION POINTS

THE NATIONAL PLAN HAS SIX GOALS; EACH WITH ACTION POINTS TO ENSURE THE PARTICULAR GOAL IS REACHED.

IT IS INTENDED THAT, BY THE END OF 2007, EACH GOAL WILL HAVE BEEN FULFILLED AS SET OUT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND TIMETABLE. THE GOALS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1   COMMUNICATE THE RATIONALE FOR EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

2   A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF POLICIES AND INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE EQUITY OF ACCESS

3   ROUTES OF ACCESS AND PROGRESSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

4   A BROADER RANGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

5   NECESSARY FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

6   LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS

3.1 COMMUNICATE THE RATIONALE FOR EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Goal

We need to articulate a compelling rationale for equity of access to higher education in Ireland in order to clarify our thinking, strengthen our resolve and motivate our efforts. The general content of this rationale has already been given in the context section of the document, and the core of the rationale has been given in the vision. A summary of the rationale is as follows:

Since independence, Ireland has aspired to become a fully democratic society that looks after all of its members equitably and champions social justice and the inclusion of people with diverse backgrounds and identities. An equitable education system is crucial to achieve that ideal. Such a system should provide not only the same opportunities for all, but should ensure that every chance is given to young people and adults to reach their full potential as individuals and as members of a society. In a society where not all have the same advantages socially, economically and culturally, and where some people live with personal and social disabilities, it is imperative that our education system values and encourages all disadvantaged groups to the full.

Achieving an equitable education system has been a priority for the state in recent years and has been clearly articulated in Government White Papers published in 1995, 1999 and 2000. It also underpins the concept of lifelong learning which aims to provide a pathway through the education system from the cradle to the grave, with open doors between the home, work and education. Equity of access to higher education is an essential element in such an education system. If we are to achieve equity of access to education, educators, policy makers, parents and social partners need to work with commitment and determination to advance relevant policies and programmes from pre-school through primary, second level and further and higher education. In this work, the right of all our children and adult learners to receive a fair deal must be to the fore. The world of higher education should play a leading role in this work. Equity of access should be an integral element of the intellectual, cultural, social and economic ethos of higher education. Valuing and including all groups in higher education regardless of their background or identity will provide a powerful example and encouragement to the rest of the education system.

Action points

[Action points in bold type will be prioritised during 2005]

1   **Produce an attractive, readable publication setting out the rationale and ensure that it reaches targeted groups as well as the general public.**

2   Produce a DVD as well as a video and audio material illustrating and reinforcing the rationale.

3   Develop a website and other promotional material and use radio and TV to promote the rationale.

4   **Use the rationale to promote debate and dialogue on ways and means of achieving equity of access to higher education.**

3.2 A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF POLICIES AND INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE EQUITY OF ACCESS

Goal

Coherent and integrated action is required at all levels of our education system and wider society to achieve equity of access to higher education. Educational equity must be a part of our system from early childhood to mature adulthood, at pre-primary, primary and second level, in colleges of further education, community education centres, and in higher education institutions. Practical partnerships among the various education providers and representative agencies, with a focus on what works, will be an important element of activities to create educational equity. Those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, members of the traveller community and ethnic minorities, those with a disability, and mature students will be the focus of particular effort and attention.

The National Office will evaluate existing access programmes, arrangements and activities and develop a national framework of access policies and initiatives. This framework will set out the range of activities that should be put in place to ensure increased participation from the target groups. All areas and districts that are under-represented will be targeted, and the framework will provide direction for education providers and other stakeholders on initiatives that are successful in achieving equity of access and encouraging students of all backgrounds, identities and abilities to set high personal goals and build their ambition. In this context, the National Office will work with the Department of Education and Science and the Educational Disadvantage Committee to progress recommendations on new means of identifying and targeting resources for schools and individuals.

Higher education institutions will be required to clearly set out their strategy and targets to achieve equity of access, and the National Office will carry out bi-annual institutional evaluations to ensure that successful strategies and programmes are identified and financially supported. Constructive partnership arrangements between sectors will be promoted as well as pro-active links with parents, communities, employers and the corporate sector. Objectives for further development of access programmes and activities will be set. Comprehensive information and guidance on access activities in all parts of the education system will be developed and disseminated to potential students and the wider public.

Action points

1 **Evaluate existing access programmes for the various under-represented groups: those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, members of the traveller community and ethnic minorities, students with a disability, and mature students.**

2 Produce a framework of policies and initiatives for implementation nationally that identifies what works for each of the above target groups as well as guidelines for successful partnerships and activities across the education system.

3 **Establish arrangements so that all disadvantaged regions, schools and communities are linked to access activities and initiatives in at least one higher education institution in their region, with particular attention paid to the specific target groups, and to new means of targeting and supporting schools and individuals.**

4 Set practical objectives and quantitative and qualitative targets and indicators of progress for access activities and programmes.

5 **Support, with financial and other resources, higher education institutions that articulate and fulfil a practical agenda to achieve equity of access as a core part of their institutional strategy.**

6 Ensure that funding promotes and rewards successful strategies and partnerships with particular emphasis on targets and priority areas that have been identified.

7 Ensure that comprehensive information and guidance on access programmes and opportunities are available to learners from each of the target groups.

3.3 ROUTES OF ACCESS AND PROGRESSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Goal

At present, there are limited routes of access to higher education, which prevents significant numbers of learners from progressing to their full potential. In addition, learners in particular geographic areas and schools are disadvantaged in comparison to others. Despite becoming a mainstream second level qualification, learners with the Leaving Certificate Applied are ineligible for entry directly to higher education. There is an urgent need for expanded, systematic access routes and connections to higher education, in particular from further education and training and community education. Such developments can be achieved through pro-active collaboration and arrangements between education providers and representative agencies.

An evaluation of existing access, transfer and progression routes and arrangements will be required, including 'foundation courses' for school leavers and mature students. Constructive partnership arrangements between sectors to collaborate on entry/transfer arrangements will be promoted. System–wide entry routes for mature and adult learners will be developed. Geographical and school–based links with higher education institutions will be promoted on a local and regional basis so that all learners have clearly marked–out routes of progression and entry to higher education. A major new deal has arrived with the national framework of qualifications; this framework will create clear and equitable access and progression pathways where every award has arrangements for access, transfer and progression and learners can clearly see the opportunities available following achievement of their award. Underpinning these developments will be improved, robust information networks and guidance on access routes to higher education for potential students and the wider public.

Action points

1   **Evaluate current access and progression routes to higher education programmes.**

2   Bring about increased collaboration between the higher education, further education and second level sectors on entry arrangements for access and successful participation in higher education.

3   **Establish arrangements to link all disadvantaged regions, schools and communities to at least one higher education institution so that socio-economically disadvantaged learners, those from the traveller community and ethnic minorities, students with a disability, and mature students have easily accessible opportunities to progress to higher education.**

4   Facilitate arrangements to include new second level and further education programmes and qualifications as routes of entry into higher education, accompanied by necessary student financial support.

5   Set targets and timetables for expanded and new routes of access through the national framework of qualifications, including a systemised entry route for mature students.

6   **Ensure that information and guidance on routes of access and progression to higher education are available to all learners through guidance counsellors and other educators.**

3.4 A BROADER RANGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Goal

More diverse teaching and learning practices are required in higher education to meet the needs of a more inclusive student population and to give adequate opportunity for successful participation and completion. In order to achieve this, a wide range of expanded teaching and learning strategies are required, including the didactic approach, tutorials, group learning, practical learning, project and task-based learning, interactive, e–learning and distance learning. Modular, credit-based learning and the means of accrediting prior learning should be core features. Stronger connections and collaboration between higher education and second level and further education and training in the areas of curriculum and assessment will be required.

Curriculum development, inservice and qualifications for lecturers in higher education will constitute an important step forward. More inclusive practices should be encouraged through support of curriculum development projects that develop diverse teaching and learning practices and democratise decision-making on curriculum matters. It will be necessary to articulate learning within higher education in terms of the standards that are required and also the factors necessary for successful participation.

A wide range of modes of educational assessment should be promoted and models of good practice identified through research and practice. Higher education institutions should ensure that learners have access to comprehensive information on teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Action points

1. Pro–actively support higher education providers in producing guidelines on inclusive teaching and learning practice and educational assessment that draw on national and international research and practice.

2. Support curriculum projects that develop teaching and learning strategies for diverse groups, drawing on good practice at second level and in further education and training.

3. **Promote modular, credit–based learning and accreditation of prior learning with financial and other resources.**

4. Assist in introducing initiatives on teaching development, inservice and qualifications for higher education teachers/lecturers, with a particular emphasis on equality awareness.

5. Ensure that higher education programmes are articulated in terms of standards, learning outcomes and the factors necessary for successful participation.

6. Ensure that learners have access to comprehensive information on teaching, learning and assessment policies in higher education.

3.5 NECESSARY FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Goal

Adequate financial support and resources for learners, communities and educational institutions are essential in order to make real strides in widening access to higher education. Financial support for learners participating in higher education is of particular importance, and the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education will work with the Department of Education and Science and other partners to ensure that any financial barriers to higher education are removed. With reference to current funding programmes and resources to support wider access to higher education, there is evidence that these could be used more effectively. Indications of overlap and duplication of funding exists in some instances, and the absence of centralised data collection on funding allocations impedes efficient monitoring and evaluation.

As a result of different funding arrangements, the universities receive greater levels of financial support from the state in their widening access initiatives than institutes of technology and other institutions offering higher education programmes, and financial support and other resources are not adequately linked to outcomes and indicators of progress. The National Office aims to consolidate existing funding programmes so that eligibility and allocation processes are transparent, user–friendly and accessible to students and education providers. The basis on which financial and other resources are allocated to higher education institutions will be clearer. National and institutional budgets will be equality-proofed, and there will be more effective interaction between funding programmes managed by the National Office, higher education grant schemes and other funding programmes tackling educational disadvantage.

Consistent financial and other kinds of support will be provided to learners as they progress through the education system. Financial resources and quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress will be clearly linked and used to secure continued and increased financial resources to achieve equity of access to higher education.

Action points

1 **Develop funding programmes and schemes to ensure that learners receive adequate and sustained financial support while participating in higher education.**

2 Participate in the current review of the administration of higher education grant schemes by the Department of Education and Science.

3 **Review and propose a revised funding model for existing programmes that includes co-ordinated collection of data on funding allocations and principles for strategic funding.**

4 Produce clear information and guidelines on resource allocation to learners, communities and institutions.

5 Establish financial and other supports for part-time learners, including funding for mature students.

6 Ensure that national and institutional budgets are equality-proofed.

7 Produce regular reports on the effectiveness and outcomes of resources invested to achieve equity of access to higher education.

8 Provide advice to the Minister for Education and Science on required levels of funding to achieve equity of access to higher education from 2005-2007.

3.6 LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS

Goal

A focus on what works and developing a robust, equitable and trust–based climate of evaluation and debate are essential elements of the project to achieve equity of access to higher education. Participation and collaboration, based on a democratic model of evaluation among all partners, will ensure that this element works successfully.

To create this climate, the National Office will develop and agree with stakeholders a set of evaluation principles and implementation guidelines. It will also develop and agree national and institutional targets and indicators of progress that are both quantitative and qualitative. Reliable ways of measuring and evaluating progress in achieving equity of access to higher education will be applied.

Mechanisms for collecting comprehensive and reliable data are also urgently required, and these mechanisms will be agreed with higher education providers and related agencies and organisations. Priority will be given to systems development so that data can be collected efficiently and with maximum co-ordination. The resources of the HEA, the statistics unit of the Department of Education and Science, ƒthe Central Statistics Office, the National Statistics Board and other agencies will be fully utilised. A variety of measures of evaluating progress in widening access will be developed. The outcomes of evaluation and monitoring will be clearly and equitably linked to funding and other resources.

Action points

1   Produce evaluation guidelines that are based on democratic, participative principles.

2   **Develop mechanisms to efficiently gather comprehensive and reliable data on access to and participation in higher education for the four target groups.**

3   Monitor targets and indicators of progress at national and institutional level that are both quantitative and qualitative.

4   Regularly publish discussion papers and reports arising from evaluations and research.

4 TARGETS

Use of quantitative and qualitative targets to achieve equity of access to higher education are essential for successful implementation of the action plan, and the National Office intends to underpin its work over the coming years with access targets that are set in agreement with the Minister for Education and Science. Setting and monitoring quantitative targets are, however, dependent on regular and systematic collection of data on higher education participation by under-represented groups. To date, such data has not always been available. Improvement in data collection is an important action point in the plan, and the National Office will prioritise this during 2005.

A number of recent developments will be of considerable assistance. These include

> – a new student records database for the sector as a whole that has been developed by the HEA in partnership with higher education institutions
>
> – a full survey of the socio-economic background of entrants to higher education using Professor Pat Clancy's survey methodology, due for completion by mid- 2005
>
> – new data on student participation from the fund for students with a disability, due in November 2004
>
> – development of student records data by the statistics unit of the Department of Education and Science.

The National Office will draw on these and other sources to set both national and institutional targets for participation in higher education by socio-economically disadvantaged students, those from the traveller community and ethnic minorities, mature students, and students with a disability.

The 2001 *Report of the Action Group on Access to Higher Education* recommended percentage-based targets for 2003 and 2006 for three of the under-represented groups in higher education. These are included below.

Participation in higher education by students with a disability
The 2002 Census reports that 323,707 or 8.3% of the Irish population have a disability. The last national survey of participation of students with a disability in higher education was in 1998. There is some local and regional evidence that the number of students with a disability is growing; comprehensive data will be available on the number of students availing of the Fund for Students with a Disability later in 2004. The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) is also conducting a survey of the numbers of students with a disability in higher education. From these data, the National Office will review the 2006 target of 1.8% of new entrants that was set by the 2001 Action Group and set national and institutional targets to the end of 2007.

Action group target: students with a disability

| Students with a disability | 1998 | 0.9% |
| – new entrants | **2006** | **1.8%** |

Participation in higher education by mature students
Ireland's success to date in achieving equity of access to higher education for mature students remains behind that of many other OECD countries. A range of policy reports over the past five years, including a White Paper on adult education (2000), has recommended policy development, additional resources and targeted initiatives to widen access to higher education for mature students, and these recommendations have been endorsed most recently by the 2004 OECD *Review of Higher Education in Ireland*.

Recent HEA and Department of Education and Science data on mature student participation show that, currently, approximately 10% of full-time entrants to higher education were over twenty–three years of age. Comprehensive data for part-time students is not available.

The new HEA database will provide more comprehensive data on part-time and full-time mature student participation towards the end of 2004, and from these and other sources, the National Office will review the 2006 targets of 10% of

full-time students and 30% of full-time and part-time combined and set national and institutional targets to the end of 2007.

Action group target: mature students

Mature students (full-time)	1998	4.5%
– new entrants	**2006**	**10%**

Mature students (part-time and full-time combined)	1998	22%
– new entrants	**2006**	**30%**

Participation in higher education by socio-economically disadvantaged young people

The last full-scale survey of the socio-economic background of entrants to higher education was carried out in 1998 by Professor Pat Clancy. The survey showed that participation in higher education by two particular socio-economic groups – the children of parents engaged in unskilled and agricultural work – was particularly low. Entrants from these two groups combined corresponded to just 16% of the relevant population, with the majority from middle and upper income groups.

A 'snapshot' survey commissioned by the HEA in 2003–4 has provided some indications of progress in achieving equity of access to higher education for these under–represented socio–economic groups. A full–scale survey during 2004–5 will provide comprehensive data. It is expected that data from this full survey will be available from mid–2005. From these data the National Office will review the 2006 target of 27% of new entrants from the unskilled and agricultural worker groups that was set by the 2001 Action Group, as well as reviewing participation of other disadvantaged groups, and set national and institutional targets to the end of 2007.

Action group target: socio-economically disadvantaged students (two groups: unskilled and agricultural workers)

Socio-economically disadvantaged students	1998	16%
– new entrants	**2006**	**27%**

Participation in higher education by the traveller community and ethnic minorities

The 2002 Census reports that 23,681 of the Irish population are members of the traveller community. Of 13,680 travellers in all age groups over fifteen years of age, just 1.4% (197) have a higher education qualification (2002 Census). This compares to 21% of the general population. This figure should be viewed in the context of CSO data which shows that only 2% of travellers have completed senior cycle at second level (compared to 23% of the general population for all age groups).

The 2001 Action Group did not set targets for access to higher education by members of the traveller community. The National Office will do so with assistance from the Central Statistics Office and the statistics unit of the Department of Education and Science. It will also draw on the forthcoming traveller education strategy which is due to be completed at the end of 2004.

Regarding ethnic minority groups, the census to date has not gathered information on the ethnic background of the population in Ireland, although there are plans to do so in the next census. Similarly, data on the ethnic background of entrants to higher education is not collected by the higher education institutions, the HEA or the Department of Education and Science. The National Office intends to agree mechanisms for gathering this data as a matter of urgency and set quantitative and qualitative access targets for this group to the end of 2007.

5 RESOURCES

Funding to support equity of access to higher education in Ireland falls into two main categories: student-based funding and funding for higher education institutions. A third, smaller category comprises community-based funding. Currently, the main sources of access funding in Ireland are the exchequer and the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF-supported 'access measure' provides €27m annually to Ireland until the end of 2006.

Student-based funding

Higher education grants

Students from households with an annual reckonable income of less than €40,240[1] are eligible for a higher education grant from one of three means-tested grant schemes. Depending on income, the amount available is up to €1,180 for students living within fifteen miles of the institution they attend and up to €2,945 for those living more than fifteen miles away. Eligible students apply to their local vocational education committees (VECs) or local authority for the grant.

Approximately €89.8m of exchequer funding was allocated to grant-aid students in higher education in 2002–3 and 24,180 students were beneficiaries. The Department of Education and Science has begun a review of the administration of the schemes with a planned completion date of June 2006.

'Top up' grant

From 2000 an additional 'top up' amount has been allocated to grant holders with an annual household income of less than €14,693. Students living within fifteen miles of the institution they attend receive an additional €765 and €1,910 is available for those living more than fifteen miles away. Eligible mature students automatically receive the larger amount. €10.9m from Ireland's European Social Fund (ESF) was allocated as a top up grant to 9,984 students in 2002–3.

1 Funding amounts applicable for the academic year 2003–2004, source: Student Support Unit, Department of Education and Science.

Fund for students with a disability

Students with a disability in further and higher education receive financial aid through a dedicated fund for additional supports and services that they require. Until 2003–4 eligible students applied to the Department of Education and Science for funding, from 2004 the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education is managing the fund. €5.3m from the ESF access measure was allocated to 1,108 students with a disability in 2002–3. Ninety–eight of these were in further education and the remaining 1,010 in higher education.

Student assistance fund

The student assistance fund is available to students experiencing particular or unexpected hardship during their course of study and is allocated on a per capita basis to each higher education institution. Students apply for support from the student services division or access officers within their institution. Until the end of 2003 the Department of Education and Science managed the student assistance fund, from 2004 the National Office has taken over its management. Funding amounts available to each higher education institution have varied each year and are dependent on the level of demand for student support through the 'top up' grant. €8m from the ESF access measure was allocated to higher education institutions in 2003–4; the number of students in receipt of funding is currently being collated.

Funding for higher education institutions

HEA-funded institutions

Since 1996 the HEA has operated a targeted/strategic initiatives scheme in which universities and other HEA–funded institutions submit proposals for funding under a number of headings each year. One of these is 'improving access'. Funding for the initiatives is drawn from the annual block grant for institutions that is managed by the HEA. €7.3m was allocated to ten institutions in 2004 for access activities.

Other higher education institutions

The Department of Education and Science manages funding for fourteen institutes of technology, including the Dublin Institute of Technology, and other publicly funded higher education institutions such as the National College of Ireland and Tipperary Institute. In 1999 a total of €500,000 of exchequer funding was allocated to institutes of technology to develop access and retention activities. In 2000 this sum was increased to €1.3m, and a similar amount has been allocated each subsequent year. Each institution is also directed to allocate €10.16 of its capitation fee for each student for access activities, which amounts to a total of c. €530,000 each year across the fourteen institutions. It is understood that, in addition to this targeted funding, the institutes also draw on other funding to supplement available resources. Further detail is not currently available.

Some institutions have also benefited from private donations and funding to widen access to higher education; however, further details have not been collated.

Community-based funding

Millennium partnership fund

Community-based funding to promote access to higher education is available through the millennium partnership fund which began in 2000. The fund is available to students from partnership/community group areas that implement the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP). The millennium fund is a targeted initiative designed to support retention and participation from under-represented groups of students in further or higher education. It complements a range of community-based access initiatives and other educational interventions delivered by partnerships/community groups.

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education assumed overall responsibility for the fund from 2004. Area Development Management (ADM) in its role as an intermediary company is managing the implementation of the fund for the 2004–5 academic year.

Resource allocation and the action plan

Adequate and sustained financial support and other resources for students, communities and education providers are essential for success over the coming years in achieving equity of access to higher education. At present, funding is not always adequate, and there is considerable variation in the resources that are available to stakeholders for access initiatives. Access funding has increased over the past ten years; however, the effectiveness of individual funding programmes has yet to be evaluated, and as a result, their impact and outcomes are unclear.

As a first step, the National Office begun a review of each of the programmes it manages. These include the fund for students with a disability, the student assistance fund, the millennium partnership fund and HEA-funded access initiatives. Work is also under way with the institutes of technology and the Department of Education and Science to examine funding arrangements to achieve equity of access in those institutions. At present, different levels of funding are available to different higher education institutions. The review process will result in a much better understanding of the strengths of each of the programmes and funding arrangements as well as resource needs and developmental steps that are required for the future. Indicators of progress which are both quantitative and qualitative will be developed. It is planned that the funding review will be complete by January 2005 and this action point appears in the plan.

The National Office will also participate in the review of the administration of higher education grant schemes by the Department of Education and Science. There is some evidence that the current structure of the grant schemes is

resulting in higher demands on other funding programmes, including the student assistance fund. A grant scheme that provides effective financial support to students most in need will result in more effective use of funding within other programmes.

A range of reports and policy documents over the past five years (Points Commission, 1999; White Paper, 2000; Action Group Report, 2001), and most recently the OECD *Review of Higher Education in Ireland* (2004), have recommended financial support for part-time learners. The National Office will work with the Department of Education and Science and partner agencies to progress this recommendation. Following this review process, the National Office will be able to assess the impact of access funding for students, institutions and communities and make evidence-based recommendations for future funding. Five principles will guide the National Office in this evaluative work and in its management of funding programmes:

Funding and evaluation principles

■ A model of evaluation that is collaborative and participative will underpin all review and development of funding programmes.

■ Financial resources will be clearly linked to both quantitative and qualitative targets and indicators of progress.

■ Recipients (students, institutions and communities) of funding will be provided with clear and comprehensive information on funding processes and procedures and resources available.

■ Processes and procedures to allocate funding will be designed to be user-friendly and accessible to all potential recipients.

■ Access funding programmes will be equality-proofed.

6 SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND TIMETABLE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PLAN WILL BE MONITORED AND REVIEWED ANNUALLY. ACTION POINTS IN BOLD TYPE WILL BE PRIORITISED DURING 2005.

Goal 1 Communicate the rationale for equity of access to higher education

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
1	**Produce a publication setting out the rationale and ensure that it reaches targeted groups and the public**	**Learners, education providers, wider public**	**National Office**	**January**		
2	Produce a DVD, video and audio material illustrating and reinforcing the rationale	Learners, education providers, wider public	National Office	February		
3	Develop a website, other promotional material and use radio and TV to promote the rationale	Learners, education providers, wider public	National Office	March		
4	**Use the rationale to promote debate and dialogue on ways and means of achieving equity of access**	**Learners, education providers, wider public**	**National Office**	**January** →→→		

Goal 2 A national framework of policies and initiatives to achieve equity of access

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
1	**Evaluate existing access programmes for each of the four under-represented groups in higher education**	**Learners, education providers system-wide, agencies and networks (Including NQAI, FETAC, HETAC)**	**National Office, NQAI, education institutions**	**September**		
2	Produce a framework of policies and initiatives for implementation nationally that identifies what works for each of the above target groups as well as guidelines for successful partnerships and activities across the education system	Learners, education providers system-wide, national/sectoral agencies	National Office, education institutions		January	
3	**Establish arrangements so that all disadvantaged regions, schools and communities are linked to access activities and initiatives in at least one higher education institution in their region, with particular attention paid to the specific target groups and to new means of targeting and supporting individuals and schools.**	**Education providers system-wide, national/sectoral agencies.**	**National Office, education institutions**	**September** →→→		
4	Set practical objectives and quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress for access programmes	Learners, education providers system-wide	National Office, DES	June		
5	**Support, with financial and other resources, higher education institutions that articulate and fulfil a practical agenda to achieve equity of access**	**Higher education providers, learners**	**Higher education institutions and representative agencies**	**September**		

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
6	Ensure that funding promotes and rewards successful strategies and partnerships	Learners, education providers	National Office	Ongoing →		
7	Ensure that comprehensive information and guidance on access programmes and opportunities are available to all learners	Education providers, guidance counsellors and networks	Guidance networks, education institutions		September	

Goal 3 Routes of access and progression to higher education

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
1	**Evaluate current access and progression routes to higher education programmes**	**Learners, education providers system-wide, NQAI, related agencies and networks**	**National Office, NQAI, education institutions**	**September**		
2	Bring about increased collaboration between higher education, further education and second level institutions on entry arrangements for access and successful participation in higher education	Learners, education providers system-wide, NQAI, FETAC, HETAC, sectoral agencies	National Office, education institutions	Ongoing →		
3	**Establish arrangements to link all disadvantaged regions, schools and communities to at least one higher education institution so that learners from under-represented groups have easily accessible opportunities to progress to higher education**	**Learners, education providers system-wide, international partners**	**National Office, DES, education institutions**	**September**		
4	Facilitate arrangements to include new second level and further education programmes and qualifications as routes of entry into higher education	National Office, education providers, NCCA, NQAI, DES	National Office, NCCA, DES	August →		
5	Set targets and timetables for expanded and new routes of access through the national framework of qualifications, including a systemised entry route for mature students	Learners, education providers, NQAI, FETAC, HETAC	National Office, education institutions, NQAI		June	
6	**Ensure that information and guidance on routes of access and progression to higher education are available to all learners**	**Guidance agencies and networks, education providers, National Office, NQAI, HETAC, FETAC**	**National Office, guidance agencies, networks, education institutions**	**September**	Ongoing →	

Goal 4 A broader range of teaching and learning practices in higher education

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
1	Pro-actively support higher education providers in producing guidelines on inclusive teaching and learning practice and educational assessment that draw on national and international research and practice	Education providers, students, teaching and learning centres	Education providers, National Office, DES	December	Ongoing	
2	Support curriculum projects that develop teaching and learning strategies for diverse groups, drawing on good practice at second level and in further education and training	Education providers, teaching and learning centres and networks	National Office, DES, education providers	September	Ongoing	
3	**Promote modular, credit-based learning and accreditation of prior learning with financial and other resources**	**Education providers, teaching and learning centres and networks, HEA, HETAC**	**National Office, DES, education providers**	**August**	**Ongoing**	
4	Assist in introducing initiatives on teaching development, inservice and qualifications for higher education teachers/lecturers, with a particular emphasis on equality awareness	Education providers, students, teaching and learning centres	National Office, DES, education providers	September	Ongoing	
5	Ensure that higher education programmes are articulated in terms of standards, learning outcomes and the factors necessary for successful participation	Education providers, NQAI, HETAC, HEA	National Office, DES, NQAI, HETAC, education providers		September	
6	Ensure that learners have access to comprehensive information on teaching, learning and assessment policies in higher education	Education providers, learners	National Office, education providers, related agencies and networks		June	

Goal 5 Necessary financial support and resources

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
1	**Develop funding programmes and schemes to ensure that learners receive adequate and sustained financial support while participating in higher education.**	**Learners, education providers and representative bodies, HEA, DES, DSFA**	National Office	December	Ongoing	
2	Participate in the current review of higher education grant schemes by the Department of Education and Science	Education providers, HEA, DES	National Office	January ⟶	Ongoing	
3	**Review and propose a revised funding model for existing programmes that includes co-ordinated collection of data on funding allocations and principles for strategic funding**	**Learners, education providers and representative bodies, HEA, DES**	**National Office**	**January**		
4	Produce clear information and guidelines on resource allocation to learners, communities and institutions	HEA, DES, DSFA, other relevant departments	National Office, DES		December	
5	Establish financial and other supports for part-time learners, including establishment of a mature student fund	DES, learners, education providers	National Office, DES	Ongoing ⟶		
6	Ensure that national and institutional budgets are equality-proofed	Learners, education providers, DES, National Council for Special Education	National Office, education providers	Ongoing		
7	Produce regular reports on the effectiveness and outcomes of resources invested to achieve equity of access to higher education	Higher education providers, HEA, DES	National Office, education providers		September	
8	Provide advice to the Minister for Education and Science on required levels of funding to achieve equity of access to higher education	Higher education providers, HEA, DES	National Office, DES	Ongoing ⟶		

Goal 6 Learning from what works

	Action points	Key actors/audiences (facilitated by the National Office)	Resources	2005	2006	2007
1	**Produce evaluation guidelines that are based on democratic, participative principles**	**Education providers, representative agencies, learners, HEA**	**National Office**	**June**		
2	**Develop mechanisms for gathering comprehensive and reliable data on access to and participation in higher education for the four target groups**	**Education providers, representative agencies, learners, HEA, other data agencies**	**National Office, education providers, DES**	**Ongoing** ⟶		
3	Monitor targets and indicators of progress at national and institutional level that are both quantitative and qualitative	Education providers, representative agencies, HEA, DES	National Office, education providers		January	
4	Regularly publish discussion papers and reports arising from evaluations and research	Learners, education providers, representative agencies, HEA, DES	National Office, education providers, DES	Ongoing ⟶		

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APPENDICES

The Irish higher education system comprises seven universities, fourteen institutes of technology and a number of other smaller institutions. The system is generally described as a binary one – although this description may an oversimplification. A number of the institutions are relatively new. Two universities acquired university status in 1989, and the most recently established institute of technology dates from 1999. The overall participation rate for third level is of the order of 50%.

By OECD standards the demographic structure of the third level population is relatively unusual. Over 90% of the undergraduate population is aged between 18–20 years in the year of entry. This contrasts with a comparable figure of about 70% for the overall OECD area.

Central government (exchequer) funding accounts for by far the largest part of the revenue of all the institutions. For the universities, state funding accounts for approximately 80% of current funding. For the institutes of technology, the figure is closer to 90%. Admission to undergraduate courses in all publicly funded third level institutions is on a competitive basis (based on the grades achieved in the national second level terminal examination), and since 1996 most first time, full–time undergraduate students do not pay tuition fees. A registration charge is charged annually to students (currently €396 – 2001–2002). Postgraduate students are charged fees.

Legal framework

The universities were established under a variety of legal instruments – charters and legislation. A comprehensive Universities Act, which was enacted in 1997, provides an overall legal framework for all the universities. Legislation enacted in 1992 provides the legal framework for the institutes of technology. A separate, but analogous, body of legislation provides the legislative basis for the largest of the institutes, the Dublin Institute of Technology, which, uniquely among the institutes, has authority to award qualifications from certificate to doctoral level. The universities enjoy a higher degree of legal and operational autonomy than the institutes of technology. The statutory and operational regimes for the two sectors reflect their different histories. While both sectors result essentially from state initiatives (dating from 1592 in the case of Trinity College Dublin and the mid–nineteenth century for the universities within the National University of Ireland framework), the circumstances were very different. The structural, and academic model for the university sector is very similar to that in the UK. The origins of the institutes of technology sector can (at the risk of oversimplification) be traced back to two main

sources: new institutions established by the government from the 1960s onwards and the development of third level institutions on the foundations of nineteenth century business and mechanics institutes in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick. Both of these developments were prompted by government policy to promote third level education at certificate (two year) and diploma (three year) levels in technological subjects in line with the policy of promoting industrial and economic development. The activities of the institutes have extended to the provision of degree level courses and awards as well as to involvement in research and development.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The HEA is a statutory body which advises the Minister for Education and Science and the Government on higher education policy. It also acts as a "buffer body" for state funding of the universities. The Authority also carries out a number of review functions in respect of the university sector. In addition the HEA manages the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI) – a major research funding programme which is competitively based and which is open to all publicly funded third level institutions.

Recurrent state funding for the universities is allocated through a block grant mechanism which is made up of two main elements. These consist of a grant which is determined on the basis of a formula based unit cost allocation system and a grant in lieu of fees (based on student enrolments) which dates from the abolition of undergraduate fees in 1996. A small proportion (€13m) of the total amount (€337m) of the recurrent funding for the universities is distributed through a *strategic initiatives funding scheme.*

In contrast to the universities, the recurrent funding mechanism for the institutes of technology is based on the negotiation of programme budgets between individual institutes and the Department of Education and Science. It is planned to transfer funding responsibility for the institutes to the HEA in the near future. It is envisaged that this transfer will also involve the introduction of a formula based funding system for recurrent funding as part of a move towards greater autonomy. Funding for capital projects in both sectors – with the exception of projects under the PRTLI – is generally allocated on a case–by–case basis. Major projects are subject to Ministerial approval.

Extract from D. Thornhill (2002), "Incentives and Accountability: Instruments of Change in Higher Education"

HEA

Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas

National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education
An Oifig Náisiúnta do Chothromas Rochtana ar Ard-Oideachas

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Patricia O'Malley Director	National Parents Council
Edwin Mernagh Development Officer	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
Cathal Kelly Education Officer	The Equality Authority
Gareth Keogh / Heledd Fychan Deputy President / Education Officer	Union of Students of Ireland

APPENDIX 3 ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

Organisations/networks who were sent a copy of the draft action plan Summer 2004

Age Action
Age and Opportunity
AONTAS
Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI)
Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland
City of Cork VEC
City of Dublin VEC
CWC
Disability Advisors Workers Network (DAWN)
Department of Education and Science
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Department of Social and Family Affairs
Enterprise Ireland
Equality Studies Department, UCD
EVE
Further Education and Training Awards Council
Forum of People with Disabilities
GLEN
Gay HIV Strategies
Higher Education and Training Awards Council
Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Irish Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus
Irish Association of Older People
Irish Council of Trade Unions
ICA
Irish Federation of University Teachers
Irish National Teachers Organisation
Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
Irish Traveller Movement
Mary Immaculate College Limerick
National College of Ireland
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
National Disability Authority
National Traveller Women's Forum
National Youth Council of Ireland
National Women's Council of Ireland
Network of Irish Mature Student Officers
OPEN
Schizophrenia Ireland
St Patrick's College Drumcondra
The Gender Network
Teachers Union of Ireland
Tipperary Institute
Women's Aid

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Adrian O'Donoghue

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
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Patricia Carroll
Brendan Ferron

HEA EXECUTIVE

PERSONNEL AND ACCOUNTS

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Emer McMullin

Sharon O'Rourke

SECRETARIAL SERVICES

Jacintha Healy   *(Secretary to Chairman)*

Mary Dunne   *(Secretary to Secretary/Chief Executive)*

Mary Meade

Kate Philbin-Dargan

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

John Muldoon, IT Manager

Marie O'Sullivan, Network Administrator

NATIONAL OFFICE FOR EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Olive Walsh

Alan McGrath

Brian Johnston

Justin Synnott

Modesta Mawarire

RECEPTION

Shauna Brennan   *(Marine House)*

Graham Barry   *(Brooklawn House)*

SERVICES

Bridget Kelly

Caroline Curtis

HEA
Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas

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