



[REDACTED]

3 March 2021

Mr S Harris, TD  
Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research Innovation & Science

heconsultation@dfheris.gov.ie

**Re: Consultation on Higher Education reform**

Dear Minister,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Consultation report on reform of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971* that was published on 19 February 2021. By way of my own background, [REDACTED]

I agree wholeheartedly with the you and the *Consultation Report* on the transformation, role, and challenges for Universities in Ireland, and in this context support the proposed reform. The co-regulation model of governance and accountability is nicely described and seems like a good roadmap for ensuring HEI autonomy, with accountability to the HEA for exchequer funding and societal needs.

On the issue of the composition and size of Governing Authorities, I support a move towards a membership that is largely competency based, but also acknowledge that representation is needed at some levels (e.g. students and University staff). For governing authorities to deliver on the Vision in Section 2 of the *Consultation Report* they need an increasing number and breadth of competencies. After some thought, this is my list of competencies that I consider members of Governing Authorities should have:

- Research
- Education
- Innovation
- International positioning
- Local and National needs
- Employment, Economy and Society
- Strategy, Horizon Scanning and Vision
- Finance and Audit
- Human Resources, Equality Diversity & Inclusion
- Infrastructure, Estates and Sustainability
- Governance, Risk Management, Ethics



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The *Consultation Report* proposes that governing authorities of HEIs will have no more than 12 members. It is my view that this number should be closer to 20 (in agreement with the cited 2012 report) to ensure that there is adequate coverage of the above competencies, and to reduce the likelihood of group-think that can occur in smaller committees. For example the composition could comprise 1 independent Chairperson, 1 Chief Officer (HEI President), 8 independent external members, 2 students, 6 members of university staff. I agree that governing authorities should have the proposed features listed under 5.1.1. I also suggest that the term of office of governing authority members be half the length of the Chief Officer, and agree that they can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Staggered appointments have pros (e.g. greater continuity) and cons (e.g. lack of stability, poor ownership of earlier strategic plans) and are of less importance where members can serve two terms.

Thank you for the opportunity to make these points.

Yours sincerely

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