

HEA

Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas

THE PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH IN
THIRD LEVEL INSTITUTIONS [PRTLII]
IMPACT ASSESSMENT -
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REPORT BY THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

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FOREWORD

The Higher Education Authority decided last July to establish an independent international Assessment Committee to conduct an independent impact assessment of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI). An in-depth and comprehensive review of the programme has now been completed. The first funding awards under PRTLTI were made in 1999.

The review findings are set out in this report. The Assessment Committee considered progress by the PRTLTI in meeting its objectives to the end of 2003. The review involved, over a period of 8 months, in the region of 100 international experts and peers, engaging with approximately 600 individuals in over 40 institutions and organisations. Site visits were held together with desk reviews, bibliometric analysis, data and information collation, interviews and meetings.

The HEA welcomes the fact that the Assessment Committee - concluded that the PRTLTI is on its way to meeting all its objectives, concluded that the programme has had very positive impacts on institutional strategic planning, inter-institutional co-operation and on the quality of research being produced in Ireland, endorses the essential link between research and teaching and learning and considers the programme to be ambitious and farsighted.

The Government has set as a target that Ireland will be an innovation driven, knowledge economy. In that context, the acknowledgement in this Report that the programme has had a significant impact on the development of capabilities within the third level institutions is particularly important. The Report states ‘...we believe that PRTLTI marks the beginning of a major and most beneficial transformation of the research landscape of Ireland that will help to install an innovation-driven economy’. The Report states that the Group are fully convinced about the merits and necessity of continued Government support for the programme.

There are also areas that the Group have highlighted that need further attention. In particular, at the institutional level, more effective sustainability planning by new PRTLTI Centres and the need to embed a commercialisation ethos have been highlighted. There are recommendations for the Government, the HEA and the third level institutions, all of which need to be addressed to ensure continued progress and quality outcomes.

The HEA is most grateful to Prof. Enric Banda, currently director of the Catalan Research Foundation and former Secretary-General of the European Science Foundation (to end 2003), who chaired the Assessment Committee. We are also indebted to the other members of the group - Prof. Reijo Vihko (President of the Academy of Finland, to end March 2004), Prof. John Morrill (Professor of British and Irish History, Cambridge, UK and Acting Master of Selwyn College, Cambridge) and Prof. Lauren Resnick (Professor of Psychology and Director of the Institute for Learning, University of Pittsburgh, USA). The HEA appreciates the time and commitment the group gave to conducting this important review for Ireland.

The HEA also wishes to thank all of those who contributed as peer and expert reviewers to the programme and all of those individuals who met with the international committee, and those who contributed by making submissions to this process.

The Authority wishes to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to Atlantic Philanthropies for their generous support of this independent international assessment. The Authority also acknowledges that the financial support of Atlantic Philanthropies was of central importance in setting up PRTLl and the success of the programme. Their contribution is, in its generosity and foresight, without precedent in the Irish higher education sector.

The HEA looks forward to considering in detail the outcomes from this assessment and to working with the Minister for Education and Science, and with other Ministers and with their departments, to develop the PRTLl so that it can best contribute to the further development of the Irish higher education and research system. The Authority also looks forward to working with the broad range of other stakeholders in the system, and to continuing the work of establishing Ireland as a recognised centre of excellence for education and research on the world stage.

DR DON THORNHILL
HEA CHAIRMAN
JUNE 2004



Director

Don Thornhill
Chairman
Higher Education Authority

Barcelona, 21st May 2004

Dear Chairman,

Dear Don

I am pleased to announce that the Steering Committee appointed to assess the results and performance of PRTL I has now finished its work. I am also glad to inform you that the Committee has been delighted with the help received from the HEA staff, the institutions and research staff, from the consultants and from the other people we have met. Of course, we are also happy with the necessary independence the Committee has had in carrying out its assessment.

From the outset, the Committee was attracted by the programme's unique characteristics, in particular, its strategic focus and the challenge to institutions to prioritise, its push for inter-institutional collaboration and its requirement for a stronger binding of research with the teaching and learning interface. This is an ambitious and farsighted design that we fully endorse.

The results to date, as outlined in our report, are persuasive. PRTL I is on its way to meeting all its objectives. In short, we believe that PRTL I marks the beginning of a major and most beneficial transformation of the research landscape of Ireland that will help to install an innovation-driven economy.

We are fully convinced about the merits of continued Government support for this unique initiative. We are strongly of the view that PRTL I is a good beginning, but only that. There is still much to do if Ireland is to close the gap with its more advanced European partners and contribute to the "Lisbon agenda".

Of course, we have found some aspects that need attention. In particular, the issues of intellectual property emerging from PRTL I and preparations for its commercialisation need to be addressed, as well as a more effective sustainability planning by the new PRTL I Centres. Finding non-bureaucratic structures that will improve the overall coherence of research funding at Government level, while retaining diversity, also stands out.

The Committee congratulates you and your Executive and the Authority on the impressive results that have been achieved so far. We wish you continued success in attracting the necessary public funding for the development of this unique and worthwhile programme.

With all best wishes,

Enric Banda
Chairman of the Assessment Committee

**PRTL I IMPACT
ASSESSMENT
COMMITTEE**



From left – Professor Reijo Vihko, Professor Enric Banda, Professor Lauren B. Resnick and Professor John Morrill

Professor Enric Banda, Chairman. Director of the Catalan Research Foundation, Barcelona and member of the European Research Advisory Board. Formerly, Secretary General of the European Science Foundation, Research Professor of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) and Director of its Earth Sciences Institute in Barcelona. Also acted as General Secretary of the Spanish National R+D Plan and Secretary of State for Universities and Research.

Professor Lauren B. Resnick, Professor of Psychology, University of Pittsburg and Director of the Learning Research and Development Center. Formerly member of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce and chair of the assessment committee of the SCANS Commission and of the Resource Group on Student Achievement of the National Education Goals Panel, member of the Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education and of the Mathematical Sciences Education Board at the National Research Council.

Professor John Morrill, Professor of British and Irish History, Cambridge University and Acting Master of Selwyn College, was Vice President of the British Academy (2000-2) and is currently a Member and Trustee of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Board and Chair of its Research Committee.

Professor Reijo Vihko, formerly President and Director General of the Academy of Finland, Professor of Chemical Pathology, member of the Finnish National Council for Science and Technology and of the Governing Council of the European Science Foundation, the World Health Organisation and currently chairman or member of the boards of a number of private companies in Finland.

| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

We were delighted to accept the invitation by the Higher Education Authority to assess the impacts of this unique and farsighted initiative of the Irish Government.

In our experience, PRTL I is a remarkable endeavour. It breaks new ground in research funding schemes; especially in its focus on strengthening the linkages between teaching and research, its emphasis on institutional prioritisation of research investments and its support for institutions working together to create a more competitive critical mass of research effort. The integration of these features into a single funding scheme is what differentiates and gives a high profile to PRTL I and makes this initiative one of the most innovative that we have encountered.

Knowledge and intellectual capital will provide the foundations for the new innovation economy. This being so, Ireland must have both the ambition and the capacity to generate and to commercialise more of its own technology, domestically. A significant strengthening and development of advanced research and education capabilities will be central to the achievement of this important objective. In other words, Ireland must establish an internationally competitive '4th level' within its third level education system. PRTL I attempts to meet this objective. Following decades of relative impoverishment of the domestic research base, it represents a significant step forward in public research policy and in funding.

We perceive however that there is still much to be done to optimise the development of a knowledge-based Irish society. Notwithstanding the marked increases in research expenditures since the late 1990s – and particularly through PRTL I and SFI (Science Foundation Ireland) – expenditure on research in Ireland falls well short of international norms. Ireland is still playing 'catch-up', compared to other developed economies, especially in relation to the advanced sciences and technologies.

Our specific mandate was to assess whether the performance and results achieved to date are sufficient to show that the PRTL I initiative is on track and that it will satisfy its challenging objectives. We were greatly assisted in our task by excellent inputs from experienced international experts and consultants, by the beneficiary institutions, their staffs and students and by a wide range of other public and private stakeholders and interest groups, for which we express our deep appreciation.

For this interim assessment, we thoroughly examined the quality of the research supported by PRTL I. We have also examined the response of the institutions to PRTL I's strategic and management requirements and the effectiveness of the linkages between PRTL I funded research and the teaching and learning environments for third level students, undergraduate and postgraduate. We have reviewed where PRTL I fits into the overall funding regime for research in Ireland and related research funding bodies, as well as the continuing relevance of its underlying aims and objectives.

Achievements and Impacts to Date

Based on the extensive evidence that has been supplied to us by independent consultants and on our own investigations and site visits, it is our view and the overwhelming view of all visiting experts from outside Ireland, that the investment in PRTL I is fully justified and should be continued.

Very significant levels of PRTL I research funding are now being strategically and effectively deployed on a priority basis by institutions that are beginning to adopt a more professional approach to research organisation, planning and management. Research quality, scale of operations, and critical mass are being achieved. Remarkable advances are being made in getting institutions to work together, including the institutes of technology. We have seen strong evidence of an emerging collaborative culture between all these institutions, most of which have hitherto worked in isolation. The diversity of scientific disciplines, across all institutions that are being focused on common goals, is impressive. The unique PRTL I model seems destined to produce very highly skilled personnel for the national economy, as well as radically new scientific insights, if this level of interdisciplinarity is maintained. Teaching and learning environments for third level students are being enhanced with a significantly closer binding at the interface between research and teaching.

The external experts, all from outside Ireland, were impressed with the general trends in PRTL I publications output and impact, and we share this view. Designed to promote world-class research across all disciplines, there is evidence that PRTL I is succeeding in this in the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as in the Sciences and Engineering. Although Irish publication output is still low in comparison with other comparable EU countries, it is increasing steadily. It is too early to assess the full impacts of PRTL I funding in terms of research outputs, but impacts thus far in all fields are in the category of 'high to very high', and the bibliometric assessment shows that the impact of papers by PRTL I researchers is higher than the national average.

If the programme continues to deliver this performance, and provided the level of investment is sustained, we are satisfied that Ireland will be well on the way to creating a very strong and internationally competitive '4th level' education and research sector that will drive its ambitions for achieving a knowledge and innovation intensive economy. We reckon that the results achieved to date are all the more remarkable, considering that PRTL I is still at a relatively early stage of development, with a drawdown to date of only 37% of the funds approved.

The PRTL I process itself is generally perceived as satisfactory – “unusual by international standards, but a very fair process”. Its integrity is widely respected by the institutions and the independence of the international assessment panel in project selection is, in our view, one of its outstanding strengths. We commend the Authority and its executive for their non-interventionist approach and for the establishment of a truly competitive process committed to supporting excellent research.

However, all examiners and reviewers have expressed the view, which we endorse, that the important goals of PRTLTI will be achieved only if funding on a significant scale is sustained over an extended period – in our view, for at least another ten years.

Areas for Improvement

The positive nature of our general conclusions about PRTLTI is not without some concerns, however.

Our major concern at this juncture is about the sustainability of PRTLTI funded centres and the inadequate attention that generally is given to sustainability planning by most of the new centres. There is virtually no business planning in these and overhead provision, currently at 15%, is wholly inadequate. In our view, this ought to be about 45%. We understand from discussions with the institutions that some cross subsidisation may be required to enable continuation of ongoing levels of activity, but we would be concerned that this may hurt the teaching domain and other non-PRTLTI areas of institutional responsibility.

We are also aware that uncertainties about the stability of future funding have damaged confidence in the Government's commitment to staying the course. The testimony of stakeholders and industry representatives on this point was consistently strong and insistent. In our experience, continuity and consistency in core public funding will be essential to sustain these new PRTLTI centres and to regain international confidence that was lost as a consequence of the year long 'pause' in 2003, now happily resolved.

In our discussions we noted concerns about the extent to which PRTLTI addressed issues related to enterprise and industrial policy and regarding its exact positioning within the national system of innovation. We also noted inadequate resourcing by the institutions themselves of arrangements for intellectual property rights (IPR) and commercialisation. Though matters are improving, our visiting experts expressed concerns at the adequacy of training in IPR and in IPR protection and management.

Notwithstanding PRTLTI's explicit avoidance of commercial and near to market research, which we support, we feel that it is necessary to more clearly define its position and role within the national innovation system in Ireland. If this were done, it would enable the more effective engagement of PRTLTI with research funding programmes outside the education sector, and if achieved, would help to bring about a greater national coherence in research funding policies and programmes, generally. We have a serious concern about this lack of coherence in research funding arrangements, because it threatens not only PRTLTI, but also the whole research edifice, if it is not attended to.

We believe also, that the strategic dimension of PRTLTI continues to be very important, because it demands a careful assessment by the institutions themselves of the external environment in which they operate, including consideration of the business and enterprise policy agenda and its needs. We would like to see a stronger consideration by the institutions of this particular element of strategic planning in future and believe that it will help to more securely position PRTLTI and its contribution within the national innovation system. We feel also, that private sector 'pull' can be expected when the true potential of the capabilities being established in third level institutions is fully appreciated and we had some evidence from our interviews with industrial representatives that interest is already beginning to show in the advanced technology sectors.

Our concern about coherence in research funding extends especially to the relationship between PRTLTI and SFI. In our view, and from the evidence of our investigations, there is a mutual synergy between the two, which needs to be better managed. We are strongly of the view that PRTLTI provides the backbone on which specific initiatives like SFI and others depend and can be made effective and we have noted a significant and welcome synergy between recent SFI investments and earlier allocations under PRTLTI. But we are not convinced from what we have seen and heard that this relationship is managed in the most effective way within the existing government structures.

We feel that more can be achieved on the teaching and learning connection. The initial gains which have been substantial have been in more and better education offerings, stronger engagement of postgraduates in research and wider exposure of students to the research environment. The next must come from new and innovative teaching methods, improved instruction tools and new learning environments and, more generally, through quality improvements in the teaching and learning process itself, as much as in volume of new programme offerings. PRTLTI now needs to address the development of more innovative linkages and new binding mechanisms at the research and teaching interface.

Finally, at the level of the institutions, there is a key challenge to resolve the relationship between the new PRTLTI centres and the traditional departmental structure of the institutions. Some very major centres reported to us difficulties in overcoming departmental resistance in top-level recruitment, for example. We are aware that this is not a settled relationship and we fear that the issue is not receiving the urgent consideration that it needs in most institutions. Clearly, this issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Recommendations

Our detailed recommendations are outlined in Chapter 6. These are aimed at Government, the institutions and the HEA. In summary terms, these are:

For Government

- We strongly recommend consistent and sustained investment in this Programme by the Irish Government over the period of the current National Plan and its continuation for at least a further 10-year planning period.
- We recommend that the Government continue to support a flexible and diverse funding system for third level institutions in Ireland; a system that underpins the highest quality teaching and learning in the institutions and that motivates and enables multiple research opportunities and potentials.
- We recommend the establishment of the necessary arrangements to bring about improved coherence in research funding. We favour the establishment of a supervisory body at the highest level (Taoiseach's Department) with participation of the major funding agencies, with the aims of ensuring coherence and retaining diversity in funding policies and programmes. It should be independently chaired, ideally by the Taoiseach, and not by a sectoral minister. A transversal committee, chaired at the highest level, will help to produce the necessary coherence in funding, as good practice in other countries demonstrates. However, these arrangements should be administratively thin and flexible and avoid any new and heavy bureaucracy.

For the Institutions

- We recommend the introduction of business planning for all newly established PRTLIs and its requirement for all future funding applications under PRTLIs.
- In general, the institutions must pay greater attention to the commercial and business potential of investments made under the PRTLIs. We recommend that the IPR arrangements in all institutions be strengthened and better resourced by the colleges.
- We recommend that all institutions in receipt of PRTLIs funding for new centres should now specifically define the responsibility, authority and accountability parameters that will determine the desired relationship between these new centres and the traditional structures of the institutions. This issue will not resolve itself and will create tensions if allowed to drift. It merits the urgent attention of senior management in the institutions.
- Also, in relation to management, we recommend more management training for centre managers and opportunities for managers at different institutions to exchange information about effective management practices.
- We also recommend regular review of strategic planning at the institutions in order to assist the further focusing of activities in areas of strength and /or important emergent fields of research.
- We strongly encourage the institutes of technology to continue their participation in PRTLIs, but we are against a two-tier PRTLIs and therefore, we recommend against any relaxation of institutional competition or any ringfencing arrangements that would preferentially favour institute of technology participation.

For the HEA

- We recommend a greater focus on people and equipment in the next round of PRTLl funding and rather less than heretofore on buildings – though some institutions still struggle with large infrastructural deficits, which should be corrected.
- We recommend that institutions in receipt of earlier PRTLl funding must meet, *inter alia*, demanding performance criteria, to be specified and monitored by the HEA, in order to be eligible for further PRTLl support.
- We recommend continuation of the institutional and strategic focus of PRTLl, together with a more explicit consideration of the industrial policy agenda and priorities in the formulation of institutional strategies for research.
- We recommend that HEA undertakes a specific study of the innovation system, from the perspective of research and education, to determine how best to improve the connections between PRTLl and the economic and industrial policy agendas of the relevant Government Departments and agencies.
- In regard to the PRTLl process, we recommend that the HEA
 - improves the feedback process and the content of information provided to applicant institutions,
 - considers the introduction of *vivas* or other face-to-face opportunities for applicants to present proposals to assessors,
 - establishes a consistent set of indicators that will be used for programme monitoring. The indicators developed for this study may provide a basis for this.
- We recommend that HEA undertakes a study of the opportunities for inter-institutional education programmes.
- We recommend that the public relations side of the Programme be considerably strengthened. Possibly also, HEA ought to consider a change of name for the Programme. PRTLl is not well known or appreciated outside the education sector and ways of strengthening its 'corporate image' need to be addressed.
- In recognition of the interim nature of this report, we recommend that HEA undertake a further assessment of PRTLl in 3 to 5 years time, including bibliometric assessments and building on the data assembled for this study.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Abbreviations & Acronyms Used

AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology	HERD	Higher Education Expenditure on Research and Development
BCRI	Boole Centre for Research in Informatics (UCC)	HII	Humanities Institute of Ireland (UCD)
BSI	BioSciences Institute (UCC)	HRB	Health Research Board
BSN	Biopharmaceutical Sciences Network (RCSI)	H&SS	Humanities and Social Sciences
CAO	Central Applications Office	IAMS	Institute for Advanced Materials Science (TCD)
CI	Citation Index	IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Federation
CISC	Centre for Innovation & Structural Change (NUIG)	IBIA	Irish Bioindustry Association
CISS	Centre for Irish Scottish Studies (TCD)	IBS	Institute for Biopharmaceutical Sciences (RCSI)
CIT	Cork Institute of Technology	ICT	Information and Communication Technology
CMNES	Centre for Mediterranean and Near East Studies (TCD)	ICSTI	Irish Council for Science Technology & Innovation
COFORD	National Council for Forest Research and Development	IDA	Industrial Development Authority
CPP/FCS _m	Number of Citations Per Publication/mean Field Citation Score	IITAC	Institute for Information Technology & Advanced Computational Research (TCD)
CSCB	Centre for Synthesis & Chemical Biology (UCD)	IIS	Institute for International Integration Studies (TCD)
CSET	Centre for Science, Engineering and Technology (SFI Programme)	IIM	Institute of Immunology (NUIM)
CSHSHC	Centre for the Study of Human Settlement and Historical Change (NUIG)	IP	Intellectual Property
CWTS	Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Leiden University	IPCMF	Irish Pharmaceutical and Chemical Manufacturers Federation
DCU	Dublin City University	IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
DES	Department of Education and Science	IRCHSS	Irish Research Council for the Humanities & Social Sciences
DG Research	Directorate-General Research	IRCSET	Irish Research Council for Science Engineering & Technology
DIAS	Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies	ISSC	Institute for the Study of Social Change (UCD)
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology	IT	Institute of Technology or Information Technology
DMMC	Dublin Molecular Medicine Centre	IT Carlow	Institute of Technology, Carlow
ECI	Environmental Change Institute (NUIG)	IT Sligo	Institute of Technology, Sligo
EI	Enterprise Ireland	LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
ERI	Environmental Research Institute (UCC)	Met Eireann	The Irish Meteorological Service
ERTDI	Environment Research, Technological Development & Innovation measure	MIC	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	MIS	Management Information Systems
ESRI	Economic & Social Research Institute	MRI	Martin Ryan Institute
EU	European Union	MSSI	Materials and Surface Science Institute (UL)
EU FP	European Union Framework Programme	M-Zones	Smart Space Management (WIT)
FP6	Sixth EU Framework Programme	NCBES	National Centre for BioMedical Engineering Science (NUIG)
F & HP	Food and Health Programme (UCC)	NCC	National Competitiveness Council
FOCAS	Facility for Optical Characterization and Spectroscopy (DIT)	NCPST	National Centre for Plasma Science & Technology(DCU)
FIRM	Food Institutional Research Measure	NCSR	National Centre for Sensors Research (DCU)
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent	NDP	National Development Plan
GIS	Geographic Information System	NICB	National Institute for Cellular Biotechnology (DCU)
GMIT	Galway Mayo Institute of Technology	NIH	National Institutes of Health (USA)
HEA	Higher Education Authority	NIRSA	National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NUIM)
HEAnet	Provider of broadband internet services to Irelands third level institutions		

NMRC	National Microelectronics Research Centre (UCC)
NNF	National Nanofabrication Facility (UCC)
NUI	National University of Ireland
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Post doctoral fellow
PG	Post graduate student
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PHG	Programme for Human Genomics (RCSI)
PI	Principal Investigator
PRTL	Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions
RA	Research Assistant
R & D	Research and Development
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RINCE	Research Institute for Networks and Communications Engineering (DCU)
RTD	Research and Technical Development
RTDI	Research Technology, Development and Innovation
RTI	Research, Technology and Innovation
SC	Steering Committee
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SPD	St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
STRIDE	Forestry Sub-Programme
Teagasc	Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TRIP	Centre for Transportation Research and Innovation
UCC	University College Cork
UG	Under-Graduate Student
UCD	University College Dublin
UII	Urban Institute of Ireland (UCD)
UL	University of Limerick
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology

Countries:

Austria AT, Belgium BE, Czech Republic CZ, Cyprus CY, Denmark DK, Estonia EE, Finland FI, France FR, Germany DE, Greece GR, Hungary HU, Iceland IS, Ireland IE, Italy IT, Japan JP, Latvia LV, Lithuania LT, Luxembourg LU, Malta MT, Netherlands NL, Norway NO, Poland PL, Portugal PT, Slovakia SK, Slovenia SI, Spain ES, Sweden SE, Switzerland CH, Turkey TR, United Kingdom UK, United States of America US.

Appendix B. Terms of reference

The Proposed Assessment

It is now proposed to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the progress, results and achievements of PRTLTI to date.

The period for this will be from the commencement of PRTLTI in 1998 to July 2003. Both completed projects and more recently funded projects will be included in the assessment.

The objectives of the assessment are to monitor the operation of the PRTLTI programmes and to inform future research policy:

Monitoring of programme:

- Assess the progress, performance and achievements of PRTLTI programmes funded to date and whether these are on track towards their stated longer-term goals,
- Ascertain the extent to which the specific aims and objectives of PRTLTI in respect of strategic planning, interinstitutional collaboration, quality research and teaching impacts are being met,
- Examine the adherence to documented plans, budgets, methodologies and standards,
- Assess the administration of the programme by the HEA executive.

Policy Review:

Address broader research policy and funding issues, the strategic positioning of PRTLTI in relation to other funding programmes currently available and including the role of PRTLTI in the funding of research core capacity and capital funding.

Make recommendations for the future development of PRTLTI.

The key questions that the assessment will be expected to address are:

- Has PRTLTI helped to enhance the international research reputation of the participating institutions?
- Has PRTLTI been a catalyst for change in the management, planning and social environment within and between institutions in the research system? Has PRTLTI resulted in the empowerment of Deans of Research, Centre Directors and other senior research staff within the institutions?
- Has PRTLTI helped to improve the quality of curriculum, course provision and instruction at the institution and is it helping to improve the quality of graduate output?
- Has PRTLTI encouraged co-operation between researchers by promoting and embedding inter-institutional collaboration between third level institutions in order to counterbalance limitations of scale in individual institutions and to strengthen research outputs?
- Have any commercial potentialities, IPR, start-up and technology transfer, investment opportunities or other social, economic or development potentials been created by PRTLTI?
- Where does PRTLTI fit within national research funding policy going forward?

The assessment will be undertaken by a high level international Assessment Committee, chaired by an experienced individual of high international reputation. There will be three other members, all with international scholarly and research reputations. An independent Secretary to the Assessment Committee will be appointed to support the Committee directly for the duration of the Assessment.

The Assessment Committee will advise on assessment methods and procedures, monitor and assess the work of research and teaching/learning experts and independent consultants. The committee will also undertake site visits to participating institutions, as needed, and prepare a final report for the HEA.

The Secretary, independent consultants and the HEA Executive will provide support to the Assessment Committee as required.

Structure of the Assessment Process

The methodology is structured around the three selection criteria for PRTL I and will comprise five interconnected modules.

Module 1 – Institutional Strategy and Management Impacts

The Assessment Committee will itself take responsibility for the assessment of PRTL I impacts on the institutional context and environment for research, particularly strategic planning and management and interinstitutional collaboration. This will be carried out through site visits and interviews with the Presidents of the institutions and the Vice Presidents/Deans of Research. This will also include institutions that were unsuccessful in applications for PRTL I funding.

Interview formats and outline questionnaires for these discussions will be developed by the HEA Executive.^a Presidents will be invited to provide an advance statement on PRTL I impacts at their institutions.

The Committee will also assess the management of the Programme by HEA.

Module 2 – Research Quality Assessment

The impact of PRTL I on research quality in the institutions will be assessed through a combination of: site visits to selected institutions/programmes and discussions with researchers by selected specialists, desk-based peer assessments of a sample of PRTL I supported research publications, bibliometric analysis of a sample of PRTL I publications output, prior to and since PRTL I funding

The site visits will review the progress and performance of the research based on discussions and presentations by PRTL I funded researchers. The quality and relevance of research facilities and infrastructure provided by PRTL I and the effective utilisation of these will be reviewed, as well as the adherence by the research team(s) to commitments given in the funded proposal.

a. This work was conducted by the independent consultants and approved by the International Assessment Committee.

Specialists will be selected for these visits, with the assistance of the Assessment Committee and they will report to the Assessment Committee. Assessment Committee members may also participate in these site visits, if desired.

For the peer-based assessments of PRTLTI publications, a selection of publications nominated by PRTLTI Principal Investigators will be made. Peers will be asked to assess the research results reported in these papers in terms of the quality of research methods employed and the international significance and standing of the results obtained.

The bibliometric element of this module will be based on a citation analysis of selected PRTLTI investigators prior to and since receipt of PRTLTI support. An independent group will be commissioned to carry out this study.

A draft synthesis report on research quality, based on the results of these investigations, will be prepared for consideration by the Assessment Committee.

Module 3 – Teaching and Learning Impacts

The teaching and learning impacts of PRTLTI will be assessed by selected experts in teaching and learning, based on site visits and interviews with the relevant Registrars, Deans, Department Heads, Teaching and Learning Departments and students at the institutions.

The effectiveness of the specific measures and structures that have been put in place to ensure the linkage between PRTLTI funded research and the teaching and learning programmes of the institution, will be reviewed.

Interview formats and draft questionnaires will be developed.

A draft synthesis report, based on the results of these investigations, will be prepared for consideration by the Assessment Committee.

Module 4 – Thematic Studies

Two cross-cutting thematic studies will be subcontracted to external consultants:

- **Collaboration impacts**

The assessment will seek to establish the quality, value-added, management effectiveness and sustainability of PRTLTI supported collaborations between third level institutions, based on a review of relevant documentation and site visits to a selection of collaborating institutions.

Detailed terms of reference will be prepared for the consultants, who will report to the Assessment Committee.

- **Policy relevance and coherence**

The assessment will review and assess the relevance and validity of the stated objectives of PRTL I against the background of current and anticipated developments in research funding and the positioning of PRTL I in the context of other research funding programmes at national level. The consultants will interview key PRTL I stakeholders (including private donors, opinion leaders) and representatives of relevant government departments and research funding bodies and will report to the Assessment Committee.

Detailed terms of reference will be prepared for the consultants.

Module 5 – Assessment Metrics and Indicators

The HEA executive, in consultation with the Assessment Committee, will assemble programme metrics and indicators to provide a quantitative and qualitative framework for the work of the Committee, experts and consultants. While a necessary, but not a sufficient requirement for the assessment of a programme of this nature, they will provide a reference point and support for the deliberations of the Assessment Committee.

The quantitative indicators to be assembled will include:

Input indicators

Detailed financial profiles of PRTL I allocations to institutions, programmes, disciplines and facilities etc will be developed.

Output indicators

Quantitative indicators to measure programme outputs will include the following:

- sq. metres of new/renovated laboratory, library and office space
- number of new post graduates, post doctorates and faculty employed
- numbers of research publications, including bibliometric analysis of selected PRTL I funded PIs, before and after PRTL I support
- numbers of new/modified teaching courses and programmes provided with PRTL I inputs
- management indicators; strategic plans/new structures/new posts, including benchmarking with 1996 CIRCA Group Report
- interinstitutional collaborative agreements/structures/joint publications

Impact indicators

Whilst PRTL I was launched in 1998, allocations first reached the colleges in 1999. Thus whilst most PRTL I investments have yet to reach maturity, with some allocations being made as recently as late 2001, the assessment will document the evidence available to show PRTL I impacts on:

- the international research reputations of the participating institutions
- the emergence of centres of research excellence of significant critical mass within the research system

- research planning and management processes and the research environment at and between the institutions in the third level research system
- the quality of teaching and learning programmes and improvements in the quality of graduate output
- the existence of new structures and processes which ensure research/teaching linkages
- the generation of commercial potentialities
- the contribution to national research policy

Indicative Timeframe for the Assessment

It is envisaged that the assessment will be initiated in September, with site visits taking place in October/November, 2003. All reports from different modules will be reviewed and compiled by the Assessment Committee and it is envisaged that the report will be published by end of Q2 2004

Appendix C. Visiting Experts & Peer Reviewers

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Co. Cavan VEC and Cavan Partnership*

Mr. Paul Hannigan
Director, Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Mr. Patrick J. Kirby
Group Commercial Director, Alphyra

Ms Monica Leech
Communications Consultant

Professor Tom McCarthy
*Professor of Economics and Dean of Business School,
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Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt
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Mr. Barry O'Brien,
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Professor Sarah Moore,
Dean of Teaching and Learning, University of Limerick

Professor Ciaran Murphy,
*Department of Accounting , Finance & Information Systems,
University College Cork*

Mr. Will Priestley,
President, Union of Students in Ireland

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DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	Mary Kerr		
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HEAD OF RESEARCH PROGRAMMES	Dr. Eucharia Meehan	Barbara Carr	
HEAD OF ADMINISTRATION	Padraic Mellett	Oliver Mooney	
HEAD OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS	Gerry O'Sullivan	Frank Condon	
HEAD OF NATIONAL OFFICE FOR EQUITY OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION	Dr Mary-Liz Trant	INFORMATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS	
MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT	Stewart Roche	Cliona Buckley	
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Mary Armstrong - <i>Recurrent Grants</i>	POLICY AND PLANNING	
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Sheena Duffy - <i>Research, Socrates /Erasmus</i>	Leonora Harty	
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Jennifer Gyga - <i>Recurrent Grants</i>	Rowena Dwyer	
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	George Ryan- <i>Physical Development</i>	RECURRENT GRANTS	
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Orla Christle- <i>National Office</i>	Jane Sweetman	
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Peter Brown- <i>National Office</i>	Mary May	
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		Maura O'Shea	
		Justin Sinnott	
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		Adrian O'Donoghue	
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		Adrian O'Donoghue	
		PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	
		Ciaran Dolan	
		Patricia Carroll	
		Brendan Ferron	

HEA EXECUTIVE

PERSONNEL AND ACCOUNTS

Niall O'Connell
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, LAN 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