



Project Agreement Number: 519138-LLP-1-2011-1-UK-KA3-KA3MP

Project funded by the European Commission

Deliverable 4.3.1E

Options Brief Pack – Ireland

Document information		
Due date of deliverable	end of project	
Actual submission date (final version)	30 June 2014	
Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable	Sero Consulting	
Revision	Version 1.0 – final	
Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	<input type="checkbox"/>
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	<input type="checkbox"/>
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Contents

0. Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction	5
1.1 The brief.....	5
1.2 POERUP	6
1.3 Sero and Ireland.....	7
2. Current state of open education in Ireland	7
2.1 Open education initiatives in Ireland.....	8
3. Open education policies and recommendations in Ireland.....	9
3.1 Policies	10
3.2 Influential reports (not yet policies)	12
4. POERUP recommendations for Ireland.....	13
4.1 Higher education.....	13
4.2 Further education	20
4.3 Schools	24
Annex: Relevant Agencies.....	28

0. Executive Summary

This report is **Deliverable 3.4IE, Options Brief Pack – Ireland**. It makes the following recommendations.

Higher Education

POERUP regards the approach of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education as well-researched and in line with good practice in Opening Up Education towards Open Access, OER, MOOCs etc.

Key specific recommendations from POERUP are:

- A. HEA should recommend to HEIs that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various submodes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits. In this context, QQI and other interested parties should consider whether the specific Ireland context needs an Open Accrerator to assist small and specialist institutions to handle APL for students entering these institutions and seeking to accredit prior study. The work can build on QQI's *Green Paper on the Recognition of Prior Learning*. Direct accreditation by the Open Accrerator should be a last resort.
- B. HEA should consider whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.
- C. HEA should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in both traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding. This is likely to be controversial (as it was in Scotland) but should be done.

Other recommendations from POERUP include:

- d. HEA should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education. This is happening now but should be ongoing year on year.
- e. QQI should, with reference to the Ireland context: Continue to develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition; Engage in debates on copyright within the Ireland legal context; Consider the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition as they impact on Ireland HEIs and the specific delivery regime in Ireland (including Irish language and bilingual); Ensure that there continues to be no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting new providers (if relevant in the Wales context) and inspecting institutions/programmes. This is slow-burn but should start now.
- f. HEA and QQI should contribute to the debate about a more flexible approach to measuring credit ratings of modules, less based on study times, drawing on the Ireland experience with credit transfer, WBL, flexible learning and APL (both APCL and APEL): leading to the development of a Bologna-bis framework based primarily on competences gained not duration of study. This process should start now, but (or because) progress will be slow.
- g. HEA should encourage Ireland's HEIs to keep their continuous professional development programmes up to date in terms of newer modes of teaching and learning, including not only campus-based online learning but distance learning, OER, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and to move such programmes online and increasingly open and collaborative between institutions. A funded pilot implementation is recommended.

- h. HEA, Irish Research Council and related Ireland funding bodies should continue to ensure that any public outputs from their funded programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license.
- i. Ireland's HEIs should adopt a standard license for all openly available educational material. This is straightforward and essentially cost-free.

Colleges

Key recommendations are:

- I. Reduce any regulatory barriers against new non-study-time-based modes of provision in further education.
- II. Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.
- III. Increase scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consider the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications.

Schools

Key recommendations are:

- i. The Irish Government should ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials, possibly in collaboration with publishers.
- ii. The Irish Government should ensure that their Quality Assurance or materials approval processes permit that OER are allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists, subject to fulfilling relevant criteria.
- iii. The Irish Government should continue their focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that it is able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER.
- iv. Target areas for the use of OER in schools should include:
 - literacy and numeracy
 - Irish-medium education¹
 - online material including OER to support teaching and learning at Leaving Certificate level, especially but not only in mathematics²
 - Support for homeschooled children, both directly and via institutions such as iScoil³
 - employability in the context of 21st century skills

¹ LangOER may have useful input – <http://langoer.eun.org>

² The SCHOLAR programme in Scotland merits attention – <http://scholar.hw.ac.uk>

³ <http://www.iscoil.ie>

1. Introduction

1.1 The brief

This is Deliverable 4.3IE, the **Ireland** sub-deliverable of Deliverable 4.3 of Work Package 4 of POERUP. The overall Deliverable Title from the proposal is:

Options Brief Pack

and the sub-deliverable title is

Options Brief Pack – Ireland

The Work Package title is:

The role of National and International Policies and strategy

The revised brief (taken from the Amendment, approved February 2014) for the Deliverable states:

Options briefs packs on proposed policies will be prepared in the relevant language for:

- *England, Wales and Scotland (Sero)*
- *Ireland (Sero)*
- *Netherlands (RdMC-OUNL)*
- *Poland (EDEN)*
- *France (Université de Lorraine) and*
- *Canada (Athabasca University).*

Each options brief pack will have a general introduction, a section for schools, a section for universities and a brief section on other sectors. However, the detailed structure will be consistent with the structure of relevant ministries in the country (for example in Scotland there is one ministry covering both colleges and universities). Furthermore, the language of each document will be consistent with the terms and concepts that the country's education policies are conceived within – noting that in some countries there is no specific mention – or only marginal mention – of ICT in the education policy.

This is the options brief pack for **Ireland**.

The style of this Policy Brief

We have aimed to write these policy briefs so that they are relevant not only to the specific country being discussed but also helpful for those readers from other countries trying to learn lessons for their countries. Consequently we have given rather more background information on the target country than “locals” will need – we hope that they will forgive our apparent prolixity. We feel this is particularly important for the case of Ireland. Ireland is a unitary English-speaking country, yet with a minority language, of a size and education culture very similar to many other EU member states and regions, and often thus taken as an exemplar, in part because it takes considerable notice of EU policies in education.

Another key issue is the use of *footnotes*. Policy briefs are not “research outputs” so tend not to use the standard research “apparatus”, e.g. Harvard referencing. Indeed, some experts feel that even footnotes break up the logical flow to an unacceptable extent. However, in the area of OER and MOOCs much of the evidence is little known and much of what passes for “known” is contested or has evidential flaws. Consequently we have taken the view that for POERUP policy briefs, in particular those written by Sero covering Britain and Ireland, we shall use footnotes, hopefully mostly in moderation. An Annex on Relevant Agencies further reduces the need for footnotes.

The final point is *timeliness*. Many of the policy briefs could not be finalised until quite late in the project as there were slow-burn but vital developments under way in many of the countries. In some cases, such as Scotland, there were developments such as the Independence Referendum in September 2014 where we could not wait to hear the result; in others, such as Wales, the key developments occurred in good time. In Ireland, key developments occurred just before the end of the POERUP project, necessitating a substantial update of the draft report.

However, any document of this sort still dates quite rapidly. This is an inevitable outcome of such projects. All we can say (and more is said in Deliverable 6.2 on Exploitation) that the Sero team who wrote this group of policy briefs remains in place and indeed are working on other OER-related study projects. Our wish would be that we could carry out, or at worst advise on, an update of these policy briefs every six months or so, if there is interest.

1.2 POERUP

The overall aim of POERUP is to carry out research to understand how governments can stimulate the uptake of OER *by policy means*, not excluding financial means but recognising that in the ongoing economic situation in Europe the scope for government financial support for such activities is much less than it was in the past, or is now in some non-EU countries such as US, Canada and Australia.

POERUP does not formulate policies based on informal discussions. POERUP wants the policies to be *evidence-based policies* – based on looking *beyond* one's own country, region or continent, and beyond the educational sector that a ministry typically looks after.

POERUP also aims to provide education authorities, the research community and OER initiative management with *trustworthy* and *balanced* research results, in which feedback from all stakeholder groups is incorporated and which can be used as standard literature. A specific objective is to help readers in charge of OER initiatives to foresee hidden traps and to find ways of incorporating successful features of other initiatives.

POERUP is about dispassionate analysis, not lobbying –it strives to take a balanced view within an overall positive orientation, in respect of OER specifically, and opening up education, more generally.

POERUP aims to provide policymakers and education authorities *above institutions*, but also OER management and practitioners *within institutions*, with insight into what has been done in this area, plus a categorization of the different initiatives (major and minor) and the diverse range of providers. The POERUP studies provide practical and concrete information in order to contribute towards a more informed approach in the future. POERUP achieves this by:

- studying a range of countries in Europe and seen as relevant to Europe, in order to understand what OER activities and initiatives are under way, and why they are continuing (or stopping, or more starting) – and taking account of reports from other agencies and projects studying OER in other countries;
- researching case studies of the *end-user–producer communities* behind OER initiatives in order to refine and elaborate recommendations to formulate a set of action points that can be applied to ensuring the realisation of successful, lively and sustainable OER communities;
- developing informed ideas on policy formulation using evidence from POERUP and (the few) other policy-oriented studies, POERUP staff's own experience in related projects, and ongoing advice from other experts in the field.

Finally, these results are disseminated and are being maintained in a sustainable way. The project has a web site www.poerup.info and a wiki poerup.referata.com on which country reports and other outputs were developed and are being updated. This wiki is still active and will be sustained well after the formal end of the project, as OER, under a Creative Commons license. In addition various OER Maps have been developed – in particular www.poerup.org.uk – and will be maintained.

1.3 Sero and Ireland

Sero Consulting Ltd

Sero is an education consultancy specializing in assisting institutions and government agencies with the exploitation of IT including learning resources (libraries) and e-learning. Formed in 2004, Sero has 20 staff and associates, with a specific business arm *SeroHE* focussing on Higher Education.

Sero has many years' experience in working with non-profit organisations and foundations – including the European Commission (and its agencies and research labs), national, regional and local governments, JISC (now Jisc), and the UK Higher Education Academy.

Sero is the Project Manager for the EU project POERUP – Policies for OER Uptake – and was the Project Manager for the project VISCED – Virtual Schools and College Education – www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info. Both these projects developed large wiki databases of educational initiatives at the institutional and programme level.

They also leveraged on the prior project Re.ViCa (2007-2009), in which Paul Bacsich played a key role, which created a large wiki of virtual campus initiatives – www.virtualcampuses.eu – including several in Ireland.

Ireland

Paul Bacsich worked at the UK Open University during the 1980s and 1990s and under the auspices of EADTU (the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities)⁴ his team had a long involvement of collaboration with OSCAIL, the National Distance Education Centre,⁵ (and the Ireland member of EADTU) on a range of EU projects. He was an evaluator of technology-based learning proposals for IRCSET in 2005 and part of an HEA working group on distance learning circa 2007.

During the EU Re.ViCa project 2007-09 Paul was a collaborator on the case study of Hibernia College⁶ and as part of his role in the EU VISCED project (2011-13) on virtual schools and colleges oversaw the case study on iScoil.⁷ On several occasions since 2010 Ireland has become of interest to EU, UK university and commercial entities and he has several times been asked to update his knowledge of distance learning provision in Ireland.

In POERUP he has worked on updating the POERUP report on Ireland⁸ from its earlier development for VISCED.⁹

2. Current state of open education in Ireland

Ireland (Irish: Éire) is a country in north-western Europe. The modern state occupies about five-sixths of the Island of Ireland, which was first partitioned in 1921. It is bordered by Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom) to the north, by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and by the Irish Sea to the east. Its capital is Dublin. Legally, the term Republic of Ireland (Irish: Poblacht na hÉireann) is the description of the State – but Ireland is its name.

⁴ <http://www.eadtu.eu/members/current-members>

⁵ See for example the references in *STRATEGIES FOR E-LEARNING IN UNIVERSITIES*, September 2004, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED492532.pdf>

⁶ http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Hibernia_College_-_case_study

⁷ http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info/sites/default/files/Deliverable_VISCED_D3.7_Case_Studies/index.pdf (36-43)

⁸ <http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/Ireland>

⁹ <http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Ireland>

Ireland has a population of around 4,600,000 (2013 estimate). Comparing it with other nearby English-speaking regions – the UK home nations – this makes it bigger than Wales and nearly the population of Scotland. In EU population terms Ireland is bigger than each one of the Baltic States but smaller than Finland, Denmark and Slovakia.

Ireland is a member of the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

IT in Ireland

An estimated 65% of homes in Ireland have broadband, whether it is fixed or mobile. Some 37 % of all fixed broadband subscriptions were equal or greater than 10 Mbps up 7.4 per cent from 30.1 per cent since the last quarter. Fixed broadband subscriptions equal to or greater than 30 Mbps accounted for 30% up from 20% in the second quarter the previous year.

Educational networking

HEAnet¹⁰ (see Annex: Relevant Agencies) is the national education and research network of Ireland. HEAnet's e-infrastructure services underpin academic research and education activity in Ireland with approximately 200,000 students and staff (third-level) and approximately 800,000 students and staff (first and second-level) relying on the HEAnet network. Its network connects all Irish Universities, all Institutes of Technology, other higher education institutions (HEIs) and research organisations, in addition to all primary and post-primary schools across Ireland.

Distance learning in Ireland

Many Irish universities are involved to some extent in continuing and distance education programmes (aimed mainly at Irish residents). These include Trinity College Dublin¹¹ and Dublin City University.¹² In addition:

- Hibernia College¹³ offers distance education in certain subjects, especially teacher training, to Ireland, the UK and beyond
- Atlantic Universities Alliance¹⁴ is a consortium of University College Cork, University of Limerick and NUI Galway which is delivering distance education undergraduate and masters programmes in technology and sciences
- Institute of Technology Sligo is increasingly active¹⁵
- The Open College offers some distance courses.¹⁶

2.1 Open education initiatives in Ireland

ALISON

ALISON is a for-profit social enterprise based in Galway, Ireland.¹⁷ Their starting point is basic skills for the workplace, and for that they provide a range of high-quality courses. Since its launch in April 2007, ALISON has developed relationships with some of the largest and most prestigious institutions involved in promoting education and learning.

¹⁰ In order to limit footnotes, relevant agencies are described in the Annex at the end of this report.

¹¹ <https://www.tcd.ie/OnlineEducation/>

¹² <http://www.dcu.ie> – and see also <http://www.dcu.ie/openeducation/index.shtml>

¹³ <http://hiberniacollege.com>

¹⁴ <http://www.aua.ie/about>

¹⁵ <http://itsligo.ie/open-distance-learning/>

¹⁶ <http://www.theopencollege.com>

¹⁷ <http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/ALISON>

Coursera, edX, EMMA, etc

None of these initiatives have as yet a member university in Ireland.

FutureLearn

Trinity College Dublin is a member of FutureLearn.¹⁸

Other MOOCs

Hibernia College have started a MOOC.¹⁹

IT Sligo has announced that it is to become Ireland's first public higher education institution to offer a MOOC.²⁰

3. Open education policies and recommendations in Ireland

Copyright

Copyright law of Ireland is applicable to most typical copyright situations (films, sound recordings books etc.). Protection expires 70 years after the death of the author/creator. Irish law includes a provision for "fair dealing," similar to that used by other countries.

Irish copyright law is subject to EU directive 2001/29/EC – Harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society, most of the provisions of which were transposed into Irish law under the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000. Irish copyright law was brought into further compliance with the EU directive by the amendment act European Communities (Copyright and Related Rights) Regulations 2004.

The 2000 Act repeals much earlier Irish copyright law, but not all.

Until 93/98/EEC the term of copyright protection on a work was the life of the author and 50 years after death.

Broadly, Irish copyright applies to books for seventy years from the end of the year of death of the author, editor or creator. The term for films is also seventy years, but the expiry conditions are more complex. Where a work is genuinely anonymous or pseudonymous, copyright expires 70 years from the end of the year of creation.

Sound recordings, and broadcast and cable programmes, are protected for 50 years from first transmission.

Any work created by any officer or employee of the Irish Government or State is protected by Government copyright, which is regulated somewhat differently from general Irish copyright law, and which lasts 50 years from the end of the year in which the work is created. The position of State companies is not clear, so, for example, Ordnance Survey mapping up to the reconstitution of OSi as a state company is copyright for 50 years, while mapping published after that time may, or may not, be subject to a longer term.

Since 2005 Government organizations, local authorities and state-sponsored bodies are obliged by law to have a permissive reuse policy for copyrighted material under the Directive on the re-use of public sector information. The Government has a dedicated website on the re-use of public sector information.

¹⁸ http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/Trinity_College_Dublin_-_FutureLearn

¹⁹ <http://mooc.hiberniacollege.com/>

²⁰ <http://ilta.ie/2013/11/it-sligo-mooc-2000-sign-up-for-irelands-first-mooc-on-quality/>

A work may be used by anyone for the purposes of research or private study without the permission of the author, provided the use is conducted in a way which does not prejudice the rights of the copyright owner. The work may also be used for criticism or review or for reporting current events, with the same proviso, and provided further that the use of the work is accompanied by an acknowledgement identifying the author and the title of the work. This bundle of exceptions is known as “fair dealing”. (Although the legislation does not state the fact, it is unlikely that the making of multiple copies of a work will ever qualify as fair dealing.) The use of author’s works for certain educational purposes is permitted. These include the use of the work in examinations, and the inclusion of a short passage from the work in an anthology for schools.

A process of reform of Ireland’s copyright regime is under way, aimed at maximising the potential of Ireland’s digital industries.

Creative Commons Ireland has developed relevant licenses.

3.1 Policies

The incoming coalition government in 2011 produced a comprehensive *Programme for Government 2011-2016*²¹ which provides a useful backdrop to our educational analyses: this is also referred to in many EU-level documents including the current Eurybase material on Ireland.²² (It also is useful background to the copyright issues just discussed.)

The *Programme for Government* makes a number of key recommendations. A few make direct reference on online, even for education; though as one would expect from similar documents there is no explicit reference to “OER”, “MOOC”, “e-learning”, or “open” (in any of the senses relevant to this report). The details will be picked up in the relevant sections

Higher Education

In higher education, the overarching policy framework is set by the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, published in January 2011.²³ Its objectives are summarised by Eurypedia²⁴ as follows:

- Ireland will have an excellent higher education system that will attract and respond to a wide range of potential students from Ireland and abroad and will be fully accessible throughout their lives and changing circumstances.
- Students will experience an education that is excellent, relevant and responsive to their personal development and growth as fully engaged citizens within society;
- Research activity in Irish higher education will continue to increase. It will be characterised by its international level quality, by a strong and broad base across all disciplines, as well as significant focus in niche areas that are aligned with and are a significant support for Irish national economic social and cultural needs;
- Institutions will be autonomous, collaborative and outward looking, effectively governed and fully accountable for both quality and efficiency outcomes. They will respond flexibly to the changing needs of the economy and of society. Higher education will recruit, develop and retain high-quality staff, fully accountable for their performance to a strong and dynamic leadership.

²¹ <http://www taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work Of The Department/Programme for Government/Programme for Government 2011-2016.pdf>

²² https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Ongoing_reforms_and_policy_developments

²³ http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf

²⁴ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Higher_Education

- Higher education will accommodate a diversity of institutional missions that will be clearly articulated and defined. Together, the institutions will form a coherent and inter-related system and collectively will have the requisite critical mass for optimal quality and efficiency.
- The policy framework for higher education will make national expectations clear. The objectives and operations of the institutions and those of the funding and quality agencies will be mutually aligned, and will be underpinned by a sustainable funding model and clearly defined structures for system governance and accountability.

The document makes few specific references to e-learning and none to OER (it was written rather too early to be likely to make reference to MOOCs). Section 4.1 will discuss the more recent OER-specific policies.

Colleges

In terms of colleges, the *Programme for Government* makes the following point relevant to our report:

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning, community education and vocational training for jobseekers will be a high priority. We will expand training options for jobseekers across the VEC, further and higher education sectors to facilitate upskilling of the labour force. We will address the widespread and persistent problem of adult literacy through the integration of literacy in vocational training and through community education.

However, the main points relevant to colleges are covered in great detail in the *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*, a comprehensive report of 157 pages.²⁵ For a recent document there are surprisingly few references to technology, but there are rather more references to alternative modes of delivery.

For example, under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, objective 4 states: “Broaden access routes and range of provision, including distance and blended learning” – though the only such reference to distance learning. More generally, there are a reassuring 24 references to “flexible” in the sense of flexible forms of programme delivery and three to “recognition of prior learning”.²⁶

The report also makes a key point about status which we must bear in mind:

The standing of vocational education compared to academic education is still an unresolved problem throughout Europe. The former has a strong standing in some countries but has a relatively low standing in others. In Ireland, the lower standing of FET compared to academic education is no exception. Consequently, the Irish FET sector has to work out its own response to improving FET and its standing in Irish society. (page 22)

Schools

In terms of schools, the *Programme for Government* makes the following points relevant to our report:

Improving Outcomes

A longer term aim of this Government will be to position Ireland in the top ten performing countries in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

²⁵ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Further-Education-and-Training-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf>

²⁶ This is hard to check in the document as words in the text are separated by tabs, not spaces.

We will review Junior and Leaving Certificate systems and implement reforms necessary to encourage greater innovation and independent learning, building on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's work in this area.

Maths and science teaching at second level will be reformed, including making science a compulsory Junior Cert subject by 2014. Professional development for maths and science teachers will be prioritised.

Making Literacy a National Cause

This Government believes that no child should leave an Irish school unable to read and write. A national literacy strategy for children and young people will be developed as a matter of urgency, with school-level targets that are related to national targets.

21st Century Schools

This Government will end the treatment of ICT in education as a stand-alone issue, but will integrate it across education policy.... A new plan to develop ICT in teaching, learning and assessment will be developed. This plan will incorporate the integration of ICT policy across other agencies...

Delivering Equity in Education

We will examine how to make existing expenditure on educational disadvantage more effective, and innovative ways in which teenagers at risk of leaving school system can stay connected, for example through use of ICT-based distance learning and projects such as iScoil.²⁷

Several of these points will be picked up later.

3.2 Influential reports (not yet policies)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in May 2013 published a *Green Paper on the Recognition of Prior Learning*.²⁸ It raised six issues and asked seven questions, as follows:

1. Is it preferable to develop policy in the area of RPL rather than including it as a component of a comprehensive ATP²⁹ policy development initiative?
2. Should further development of qualifications and quality assurance policy to promote RPL be deferred until a national strategy on RPL is articulated?
3. Should QQI develop a procedure of direct application for awards? How else might it fulfil its obligations under the 2012 Act?
4. Should QQI reopen the process of agreeing RPL procedures with providers of FET Awards Council awards?
5. What measures can or should be taken to improve the collection of information on RPL activities by Irish providers and awarding bodies?
6. How urgent is the reconciliation of national approaches to credit in FET and HET to the realisation of objectives for RPL?
7. What other issues in relation to RPL should be addressed at this stage?

There seems as yet to have been no policy outcome from the Green Paper, but it demonstrated a sound grasp of the issues. (There is a companion *Green Paper on Recognition of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications*.)³⁰ The RPL issue will be picked up later.

²⁷ <http://www.virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/IScoil>

²⁸ <http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Green%20Paper%20-%20Section%204.7.pdf>

²⁹ Access, Transfer and Progression

4. POERUP recommendations for Ireland

A note on politics

The next Irish general election must take place no later than 3 April 2016. It will be called following the dissolution of the 31st Dáil by the President, at the request of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister).³¹ The election could occur earlier but at the time of writing it is not unreasonable to assume that it is 18 months away. This does give time for reports such as ours to have influence on policy matters.

On the economic situation, while the Ireland economy is showing signs of growth and optimism is increasing, there are still issues to be resolved and finances will continue to be tight.³²

As said several times before, POERUP is a study project not a lobby group for OER; and Sero is a consultancy company with a track record of providing realistic advice to governments, agencies and educational institutions over many years.

4.1 Higher education

Higher Education in Ireland consists of:

- seven universities (with associated colleges of education)
- Dublin Institute of Technology (set up under a special Act) and 13 institutes of technology
- a number of private independent colleges.

Eurybase describes the system as “principally a binary system”.³³ The universities and institutes of technology are autonomous and self-governing, but are substantially state-funded.

Undergraduate students attending publicly funded third-level courses do not have to pay tuition fees if they are EU citizens. Under the terms of the Free Fees Initiative, the Department of Education and Skills pays the fees to the colleges instead. A separate annual charge is payable to colleges for the costs of student services and examinations – see ‘Student contribution’ below. Non-EU students do have to pay fees, set at a cost-recovery level. Some students with a less direct connection to the EU pay an “EU fee” rate.

Most colleges charge an annual student contribution, the student services charge or registration fee, which covers student services and examinations. The amount of the contribution varies from one institution to another. The maximum rate of the student contribution for the academic year 2013-2014 is €2,500. Student grants provide financial support to eligible students, with a maintenance grant and a fee grant. A maintenance grant is a contribution towards student living costs.

The seven universities in Ireland are:

1. Trinity College Dublin (TCD), founded in 1592, the oldest university in the island of Ireland
2. University College Dublin, founded 1908
3. University College Cork
4. National University of Ireland, Galway
5. National University of Ireland, Maynooth, founded 1795 as St Patrick’s College
6. University of Limerick, founded in 1989
7. Dublin City University (DCU), founded in 1977 as National Institute for Higher Education Dublin NIHED; established as a University in 1989.

³⁰ <http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Green%20Paper%20-%20Section%204.3.pdf>

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Next_Irish_general_election

³² http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/occasional_paper/2014/op195_en.htm

³³ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Overview>

The National University of Ireland also has three recognised colleges: National College of Art and Design; The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; and St. Angela's College of Education.

Universities offer degree programmes in diverse disciplines, taught mostly through English, with a few in Irish. Quality assurance is overseen by QQI which is a full member of ENQA.

There are currently 14 Institutes of Technology located throughout Ireland offering programmes at degree, national diploma and national certificate levels in a wide variety of subjects. Their qualifications are externally validated by Ireland's national certification authority QQI (which absorbed HETAC and FETAC). Many Institutes of Technology also run postgraduate diploma and degree programmes, both taught and research. Dublin Institute of Technology has a special status.

A number of Independent Third Level Colleges offer programmes leading to certificates, diplomas and degrees, which have received recognition by QQI or from other external accreditation institutions (such as universities). Courses on offer include: Accountancy and Business Studies, Law, Humanities, Hotel & Catering, Tourism Studies; and Art.

There are five Colleges of Education for primary school teachers. These offer three-year full-time courses leading to a B.Ed degree which is the recognised qualification for primary school teaching.

Overall enrolments to the HE system continue to increase with over 196,000 fulltime and part-time students enrolled in HEA-funded institutions in 2011/12. This represents an increase of 1.6% over the previous year. The number of PhD enrolments continues to increase with over 7,600 full-time PHD students in HEA-funded institutions, reflecting the continuing development of graduate education in Ireland.

Another key trend is the increase in part-time and flexible learning, with a one-year increase of 3.7% in the number of part-time students. The number of students engaged in distance education has shown a one-year increase of 30%.

For more details see the relevant Eurypedia section.³⁴

National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* makes a large number of recommendations. None mention OER or open educational resources specifically. However, there are several mentions of e-learning, but only one within the body of the recommendations.

- Higher education students of the future should have an excellent teaching and learning experience, informed by up-to-date research and facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources, such as libraries, laboratories, **and e-learning facilities**.

There are other mentions of e-learning in the narrative:

*While large group teaching, supplemented by tutorials and laboratory sessions, will continue to be the bedrock of instruction in higher education, **it will increasingly be complemented by e-learning (including podcasting and online discussion groups)**, self-directed learning, problem-based learning, and collaborative projects.*

This chapter deals with the first of the three interconnected core roles of higher education – that of providing teaching and facilitating learning. It describes how the system must respond over the coming years to changes in the composition of the student body, to new technologies and their potential for enhancing the learning experience, and to changes in the external environment. Appropriate response to these changes will ensure that higher education students of the future will have an excellent learning experience, informed by up-

³⁴ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Higher_Education

*to-date research and facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources, such as libraries, laboratories, **and e-learning facilities**.*

*Transnational education is becoming ever more important, and is based on innovations such as branch campuses, **e-learning/distance learning**, and joint degree programmes – in some countries it has become more important than the teaching of international students on home campuses. This is the stage on which Irish higher education institutions operate and it clearly demands a strategic approach to internationalisation and global engagement. In this regard, it is crucial that internationalisation in higher education in Ireland is understood in its broadest context, and not just from a revenue-generating point of view.*

*Competitiveness in the international area, and capacity for global engagement, may benefit from institutional adaptations and reform. These include more flexible deployment of staff, a more diverse and internationally experienced staff cohort, more intensive use of resources, **increased use of innovative forms of delivery (such as e-learning)**, changes to programme structures (including full semesterisation and full calendar year programmes) and increased overseas delivery of programmes (for example, in Irish-linked, or Irish-administered institutions overseas).*

*Student body: While retaining diversity of current school leaver population, significant increases in the numbers of part-time students to facilitate upskilling. Provision of evening, weekend and summertime campus learning, **open distance e-learning** and work-based learning.*

The *National Strategy* also recommends that one of the KPI metrics should be:

- Proportion of students who are engaged in upskilling and non-traditional study arrangements (part-time, e-learning etc.);

Recent developments

The *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education* was set up in November 2012 by the Minister for Education and Skills.³⁵ It has a central focus on enhancing the quality of the learning experience for all students, be they full-time, part-time or flexible learners. It will have a vital role to play in supporting excellence in teaching and learning across all higher education institutions. These goals are in line with key objectives outlined on teaching and learning in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*.

The National Forum is made up of representatives from Higher Education Institutions, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Union of Students of Ireland (USI).

In May 2014 the National Forum issued a 26-page report *Building Digital Capacity in Higher Education: Principles and first insights from the sectoral consultation – with preliminary recommendations and actionable first steps*, reporting on a sector-wide consultation it had carried out earlier in 2014.

The report is a complex document that resists a brief summary but it did make six concise recommendations for going forward. (See overleaf.)

³⁵ <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2012-Press-Releases/PR2012-11-22.html>

1. Prioritise the strategic development of digital capacity in institutional and national policy and quality frameworks
2. Develop a consistent, seamless and coherent digital experience for students in Irish higher education
3. Engage with students and teachers to develop digital literacy
4. Strengthen and support collaboration within and between institutions, and with different parts of the higher-education sector
5. Develop shared policies and infrastructure that reflect the complexity of an increasingly digital learning environment
6. Develop digital capacity in tandem with a strong evidence base for enhanced pedagogy

It also enunciated nine “values and principles” A–I of which the last is most pertinent to Opening Up Education:

- A. Shared recognition of the collaboration imperative
- B. The shared need for a strong understanding of the current context
- C. A commitment to the development of digital literacy among teachers and students – along with the time and support this development requires
- D. A responsibility for recognising differences – among students, disciplines and institutions
- E. A commitment to the development and use of a strong evidence base
- F. Educational responsibility for identifying risks and concerns about an increasingly digital world, as well as opportunities and benefits
- G. A commitment to including students as key partners in the education process
- H. A focus on assessment and feedback as key routes to digital-capacity development and innovation
- I. *The adoption of the principles of open education to support future development in higher education [our italics]*

In June 2014 the National Forum issued a Call for Proposals to Ireland’s HEIs, announcing also a webinar to be held on 26 June 2014:³⁶

Higher education institutions... are invited to make collaborative proposals for funding under the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund 2014 (Building Digital Capacity in Irish Higher Education) The fund amounts to €6 million and the total investment will be over a 3-year time-frame ending in 2016. In this inaugural call, €2 million will be available for allocation of phase 1 funding. Proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis in accordance with the criteria and processes outlined in this call.

Also of great interest is their list of seven “Actionable First Steps” that they expect proposals to follow.

Step 6 (next to last) is the specific “open” step – but what is interesting is to see the “open” step put into context as part of a wider change process (in the spirit of the EU’s *Opening Up Education* proposals), rather than standing in isolation as so many OER enthusiasts seem to desire.

For clarity the steps are listed together on the next page.

³⁶ <http://teachingandlearning.ie/priority-themes/benchmarking-digital-platform/teaching-learning-enhancement-fund-call-proposals>

1. Higher education institutions should each develop a strategy and review process that clearly outlines how the development of digital capacity will be addressed at an institutional level. The strategy should include a strong focus on teaching and learning, and an explicit review process that ensures the strategy remains up to date in a rapidly developing technological environment. NB: In order to set the scene for effective collaboration, all proposing institutions need to make explicit their strategy and review process for enhancing teaching and learning, which incorporates the development of digital capacity
2. A systematic review of technical infrastructure across the sector should be undertaken. This will identify clearly the current status and the specific technical infrastructural developments that need to be resourced to support building digital capacity in the future. This review should involve all stakeholders (senior management, IT specialists, teachers, students, other stakeholders e.g. HEAnet)³⁷ and results should be published by the end of 2014.
3. The establishment of a collaborative approach to the development of policies and practices for the sector that enable digital innovation for teaching and learning in an increasingly regulated environment. These policies and approaches should be made available nationally.
4. The development of new approaches to assessment and feedback that leverage the potential of digital technologies to enhance and transform student learning in ways that support students' performance and prepare them for a world that is increasingly digital.
5. A strategic approach to programme development (inter or intra-institutional) should be piloted and evaluated. This should include all stakeholders in the design process, leverage digital technology in delivery and assessment, and actively integrate and support the development of the digital literacy of staff and students.
6. **The adoption of open-education principles by all higher education institutions to support the active development of open-access institutional repositories for research outputs and teaching and assessment resources.**
7. A coherent approach to academic and technical support-provision and sharing should be piloted as a model for the development of future supports across institutional clusters in an environment of constrained resources.

In our view the National Forum consultation, report and Call indicate a country with an insightful realistic plan for building digital capacity in institutions in an open way. All we shall do in the rest of this higher education section is to correlate the National Forum proposals against the POERUP HE recommendations (which are rather similar to the Opening Up Education recommendations, but HE-specific) and provide some suggestions as to ways forward.

Key Policy Recommendations

POERUP general recommendations for higher education

From the POERUP standpoint, Deliverable 4.2U produced in September 2013 a comprehensive and thoroughly piloted set of recommendations to foster OER in higher education across the EU. (The recommendations have been presented at many conferences and discussed in many meetings, including meetings of the POERUP International Advisory Committee. There have been very few comments suggesting anything more than minor revisions to these.) Hence we shall take the POERUP HE recommendations as the other source of our recommendations. The POERUP HE EU-level recommendations have been adapted to the Ireland context in internal POERUP documents, as follows (overleaf):

³⁷ <http://www.heanet.ie> – and see Annex

1. HEA should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education
2. QQI should, with reference to the Ireland context: Continue to develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition; Engage in debates on copyright within the Ireland legal context; Consider the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition as they impact on Ireland's HEIs and the specific delivery regime in Ireland (including Irish language); Ensure that there continues to be no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting new providers and inspecting institutions/programmes.
3. HEA and QQI should contribute to the debate about a more flexible approach to measuring credit ratings of modules, less based on study times, drawing on the Irish experience with credit transfer, WBL, flexible learning and APL (both APCL and APEL): leading to the development of a Bologna-bis framework based primarily on competences gained not duration of study.
4. HEA should recommend to universities that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various submodes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits. In this context, QQI and other interested parties should consider whether the specific Ireland context needs an Open Accriterator³⁸ to assist small and specialist institutions to handle APL for students entering these institutions and seeking to accredit prior study.
5. HEA should consider whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.
6. HEA, IRCSET and related Ireland funding bodies should continue to ensure that any public outputs from their funded programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license.
7. HEA should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in both traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding.
8. Ireland's HEIs should adopt a standard license for all openly available educational material.
9. HEA should mount an initiative to upgrade the level of knowledge of university staff on IPR issues, perhaps as part of some wider initiative e.g. on MOOCs so as to give context and applicability for the knowledge.
10. HEA should encourage Ireland's HEIs to keep their continuous professional development programmes up to date in terms of newer modes of teaching and learning, including not only campus-based online learning but distance learning, OER, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and to move such programmes online and increasingly open and collaborative between institutions.
11. HEA should encourage institutions to consider the use of incentive schemes (and reconsider the issue of non-incentives) for academics engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.
12. HEA and related bodies should fund research into the benefits of OER in the Ireland HE context, with greater efforts to integrate this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy, and with wider research on OER in and beyond Ireland.

³⁸ Ireland might not, whereas England probably does, with its wide range of sizes of institutions and many specialist small providers (many of them private providers).

This is a rather long list of recommendations, so some prioritisation is needed and identification of any gaps to be filled. The ones in bold are our **key recommendations**; ones in *italics* are also recommended.

#	<i>POERUP says</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
1.	<i>HEA should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education</i>	Under way from the National Forum, but should be ongoing year-on-year
2.	<i>QQI should, with reference to the Ireland context: Continue to develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition; Engage in debates on copyright within the Ireland legal context; Consider the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition as they impact on Ireland HEIs and the specific delivery regime in Ireland (including Irish language and bilingual); Ensure that there continues to be no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting new providers (if relevant in the Wales context) and inspecting institutions/programmes.</i>	This is slow burn but should start now.
3.	<i>HEA and QQI should contribute to the debate about a more flexible approach to measuring credit ratings of modules, less based on study times, drawing on the Ireland experience with credit transfer, WBL, flexible learning and APL (both APCL and APEL): leading to the development of a Bologna-bis framework based primarily on competences gained not duration of study.</i>	Should start this process now: but (or because) progress will be slow.
4.	HEA should recommend to HEIs that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various submodes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits. In this context, QQI and other interested parties should consider whether the specific Ireland context needs an Open Accreditor to assist small and specialist institutions to handle APL for students entering these institutions and seeking to accredit prior study.	Recommended. The work can build on QQI's <i>Green Paper on the Recognition of Prior Learning</i> . Direct accreditation by the Open Accreditor should be a last resort.
5.	HEA should consider whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.	Recommended
6.	<i>HEA, IRCSET and related Ireland funding bodies should continue to ensure that any public outputs from their funded programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license.</i>	Should be straightforward
7.	HEA should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in both traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding.	This is likely to be controversial (as it was in Scotland) but should be done.
8.	<i>Ireland's HEIs should adopt a standard license for all openly available educational material.</i>	Should be straightforward and cost-free
9.	HEA should mount an initiative to upgrade the level of knowledge of university staff on IPR issues, perhaps as part of some wider initiative e.g. on MOOCs so as to give context and applicability for the knowledge.	Not a priority

#	POERUP says	Commentary
10.	HEA should encourage Ireland's HEIs to keep their continuous professional development programmes up to date in terms of newer modes of teaching and learning, including not only campus-based online learning but distance learning, OER, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and to move such programmes online and increasingly open and collaborative between institutions.	A funded pilot implementation is recommended
11.	HEA should encourage institutions to consider the use of incentive schemes (and reconsider the issue of non-incentives) for academics engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.	Not appropriate at this time
12.	HEA and research bodies should fund research into the benefits of OER in the Ireland HE context, with greater efforts to integrate this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy, and with wider research on OER in and beyond Ireland.	Encourage research councils and EU bids in this area

Notes on POERUP specific HE recommendations for Ireland

Recommendation 4: Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), also called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – and in US and Canada Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) – describes a process used by universities, colleges, etc to assess the skills and knowledge acquired outside the formal education process for the purpose of recognizing competence against a given set of competencies (or standards or learning outcomes). *Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)* focuses on assessment of previous formal education qualifications and is really a part of Credit Transfer and Accumulation; in contrast, *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)* focuses on assessment of previous experience, including informal education outcomes from OER and MOOCs.

Recommendation 5: Shared resources. This recommendation is deliberately designed to be wider than Irish-language, STEM or pre-university: it draws also on POERUP HE recommendation 7:

HEA should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding.

We feel that this is particularly important given the need for an affordable (to students) fee regime.

4.2 Further education

Further education was for many years the “poor relation” of education in Ireland. There were many different, often poorly defined, awards offered by a multitude of bodies, both ad-hoc and statutory. Typical areas included apprenticeships, childcare, farming, retail, and tourism. These are typical areas of the economy that do not depend on multinational investment and recognition. There are many different types of further education awards, known as Post Leaving Certificates (PLCs).

QQI (formerly it was FETAC – Further Education and Training Awards Council) confers awards in the extra-university system. Further education has expanded immensely in recent years helped by the institutions, and because of this the type and range of these awards have been formalized to restore confidence. There are two separate schemes enabling progression for holders of QQI/FETAC awards to Universities and Institutes of Technology. QQI/FETAC awards carry points which can be used to access higher education.

There is a wide range of colleges and private providers, with at least 40 colleges.³⁹

³⁹ An idea of the range of providers can be gleaned by clicking the “PLC Post Leaving Cert” tag on the “Courses in Qualifax” page at http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=211&Itemid=14

Existing recommendations relating to OER or MOOCs

As noted earlier, the SOLAS *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019* makes surprisingly few references to technology, but rather more to alternative modes of delivery and their recognition. We look at the OER-relevant recommendations in more detail below. The analysis below is only scratching the surface but is all that is possible within the confines of a Policy Brief.

Progression Paths to Higher Education (page 29)

The HEA proposes setting a new target for students progressing from further education, planning to make up 6.6% of the entrant cohort in 2014 and 10% by 2016.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (page 93)

Under an EU Council Recommendation, Member States must have arrangements in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, no later than 2018¹⁴⁴ and under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, QQI is required to establish policies on recognition of prior learning within the policies and criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP). In addition, FET providers must subsequently establish, have approved and publish their own policies and criteria for ATP...

Recognition of Workplace Learning (page 104)

The National Framework of Qualifications supports the further development of prior learning recognition as a broad concept that can enable entry to a training or education programme, credit towards an award, or even eligibility for a full award without participating in a formal training or education programme (NQAI 2001). In order to advance this concept, further new conceptualisations of RPL will need to be devised by QQI in collaboration with the FET sector taking account of best practice in that regard.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) within the FET Sector (page 29)

Interviews with stakeholders point to the specific CPD needs of the sector as a whole, and in particular those engaged directly in the provision of FET programmes. International research indicates that high-quality initial and continuing education for staff involved in direct provision of education and training is key to fostering better learner outcomes.

Proposed New Funding Arrangements for FET Provision (page 31)

A significant amount of state funding of further education and training has tended, in many instances, to be determined more by legacy formulae than by evidence-based needs. Continuing to offer more or less the same course profile from one year to the next is not appropriate. There is broad consensus that the current funding model around FET needs to change and respond to demonstrable demand and need as well as reflecting the local, regional and socio-economic profiles of ETBs. The aim is to replace current funding arrangements for all FET provision, on a phased basis, with a new outcomes-based funding model.

Community Education (page 96)

... Therefore, it is important that the community education sector continues to be supported in its work and that it can clearly demonstrate the benefits, outcomes and progression options for learners. Clear access and progression routes from this provision to other FET and to higher education will need to be developed....

Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (page 97)

... Later in 2013, the Government enshrined an adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy as part of the FET Strategy to be developed by SOLAS, in the Further Education and Training Act....

POERUP general recommendations for colleges

POERUP Deliverable 4.2C produced in October 2013 a comprehensive set of recommendations to foster OER in further education (called FET in Ireland) across the EU.⁴⁰ These recommendations have been presented at many conferences and discussed in many meetings, including meetings of the POERUP International Advisory Committee and workshops in several countries across Europe. Hence we shall take these as the source of our draft FE recommendations. However, the recommendations in Deliverable 4.2C are formulated in a complex multi-level way (EU and member states and then to institutions) so that for this discussion we use a simpler version focussing purely on Member States.

1. *Communications and awareness raising*

- Mount a campaign to educate lecturers, teachers and trainers on IPR issues.
- Promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through the European Commission's cultural sector programmes and national cultural sector programmes, to make these available across the country.

2. *Funding and resources*

- Ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.
- Increase scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consider the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications.
- Fund research into standardised syllabi country-wide for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for national action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks.

3. *Reducing regulatory barriers*

- Reduce any regulatory barriers against new non-study-time-based modes of provision in further education.

4. *Quality issues*

- Establish a national quality assurance standard for OER content produced in the country.
- Ensure that OER is allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists.
- Require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.
- Consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. (This panel should include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts.)
- Consider establishing a specialist OER function to undertake a cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy.
- Consider in the relevant quality agency the effects of OER and other new modes on quality assurance and recognition and ensure that there is no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting institutions both public and private including for-profit (if relevant), accrediting programmes (if relevant) and assessing/inspecting institutions/programmes.

⁴⁰ An early version of these was revealed to public gaze on 19 September 2013:
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/169380658/Proposed-EU-OER-Policies-for-the-FE-Sector-Rel-1>

5. *Teacher training and continuous professional development*

- Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers, teachers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support teacher / trainer / lecturer CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.
- Develop incentive schemes for lecturers, teachers and trainers engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.

6. *Certification and accreditation*

- (for larger Member States, but potentially applicable to Wales) Set up an Open Accrerator to accredit a range of studies which could articulate into a route to an undergraduate degree. In the first instance the Accrerator should focus on qualifications in the ISCED 5B area as this is most correlated with high-level skills for business and industry.

7. *Infrastructure issues*

- Continue a focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that learners are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER in their further education activities.
- Where institutions are providing digital devices, ensure that all considerations have been taken to maximise the effectiveness (economically and pedagogically) of devices, support and strategy with regards to OER.

8. *Further research*

- Foster research into the benefits of OER and sustainable business models, integrating this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.
- Support educational institutions in developing new business and educational models and launch research and policy experimentations to test innovative pedagogical approaches, curriculum development and skills assessment.

POERUP specific proposals for Ireland's colleges

Of the above, we recommend the following as the initial priorities, with key ones in bold. (The numbering is that of the POERUP recommendations immediately prior to this.)

Progression Paths to Higher Education; Recognition of Prior Learning; and Workplace Learning

3. *Reducing regulatory barriers*

- **Reduce any regulatory barriers against new non-study-time-based modes of provision in further education.**

4. *Quality issues*

- Consider in the relevant quality agency [QQI] the effects of OER and other new modes on quality assurance and recognition and ensure that there is no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting institutions both public and private including for-profit (if relevant), accrediting programmes (if relevant) and assessing/inspecting institutions/programmes

6. *Certification and accreditation*

- Set up an Open Accrerator to accredit a range of studies which could articulate into a route to an undergraduate degree. *We would see QQI reassert its accrerator role but essentially as an Accrerator of Last Resort, in case of provider failure adequately to accredit*

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) within the FET Sector

5. *Teacher training and continuous professional development*

- **Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.**
- Develop incentive schemes for lecturers, teachers and trainers engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.

Proposed New Funding Arrangements for FET Provision

2. *Funding mechanisms and copyright / licensing issues*

- Ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.
- **Increase scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consider the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications.**

Community Education; Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (and other relevant specific subjects)

3. *Reducing regulatory barriers*

- Fund research into standardised syllabi country-wide for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for national action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including open repositories and (jointly with publishers) open textbooks.

Other aspects

8. *Further research*

- Foster research into the benefits of OER and sustainable business models, integrating this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.
- Support educational institutions in developing new business and educational models and launch research and policy experimentations to test innovative pedagogical approaches.

4.3 Schools

The education systems are largely under the direction of the government. The Department of Education and Science, under the control of the Minister for Education and Science, is in overall control of policy, funding and direction. There are many other statutory and non-statutory bodies which have a function in the education system.

Recognised primary and secondary schools must adhere to the curriculum established by authorities that have power to set them. Education is compulsory all for children in Ireland from the ages of 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second-level education. English is the primary medium of instruction at all levels, except in Gaelscoileanna (where Irish is the working language and which are increasingly popular).

Each school is managed by a management board representative of trustees, parents, teachers and the local community. Boards of management are supported through guidance documentation, advice and training provided by the relevant management bodies and the Department and supported through core funding from the Department.

While almost all primary schools and the majority of post-primary schools are locally owned and managed, schools have relatively limited autonomy especially in relation to curriculum and the

pedagogical methods employed. The curriculum is laid down from the centralised administration and the local Inspectorate ensures adherence to the rules and to the teaching of the curriculum.

Pisa, the Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, ranks Ireland's school education as the 20th best in the world, significantly higher than the OECD average.

The Constitution of Ireland allows education to be provided in the home; this has caused much legal wrangling for years as to the minimum standards required for home education, since the constitution does not explicitly provide for the State to define these minimum standards.

Bridge21⁴¹ is a virtual school initiative offering a new model of learning that can be adapted for use in Irish secondary schools; iScoil⁴² is a virtual school offering blended learning to students between the ages of 12 and 16 who have disengaged from the school system. There is also homeschooling as a citizen constitutional right.⁴³

In 1973 the requirement to pass the Irish language in order to receive a second-level certificate was dropped although a student attending a school which receives public money must be taught the Irish language. Certain students may get an exemption from learning Irish; these include students who have spent a significant period of time abroad or students with a learning difficulty.

This uniformity and control (by the local authority or religious school board) should make it easier in Ireland to bring about the kind of systemic change engendered by OER – in theory, at least

In Ireland, as in many other EU Member States, the main government attention to OER matters has gone mostly to universities (as in Netherlands after Wikiwijs ended). Nevertheless the Programme for Government document describes key issues of PISA, literacy, numeracy, mathematics and 21st Century Schools that are in process of being addressed. On the last, it states:

The primary priority for investment in ICT in the immediate term will be the integration of ICT in teaching and learning across the curriculum and investing in broadband development to ensure schools have access to fibre-powered broadband. Investment in ICT will be maximised through pooling of ICT procurement.

Greater use of online platforms will be made to offer a wide range of subjects and lessons online, and to enable schools to 'share' teachers via live web casts. These online lessons will be made available through a new Digital School Resource, bringing together existing resources from National Council for Curriculum Assessment, Department of Education and other sources as a cost effective means of sharing expertise between schools.

We will engage with the publishing industry to develop more online learning resources and new mediums for their learning materials.

Separately under "Delivering Equity in Education", it gives as an objective:

We will examine how to make existing expenditure on educational disadvantage more effective, and innovative ways in which teenagers at risk of leaving school system can stay connected, for example through use of ICT-based distance learning and projects such as iScoil.

POERUP general recommendations for schools

POERUP Deliverable 4.2S produced in June 2014 (after eight months of piloting and refinement) a comprehensive multi-level set of recommendations to foster OER in schools across the EU. As we also did with colleges, we rephrase these to focus specifically at the Member State level (overleaf):

⁴¹ <http://www.bridge21.ie>

⁴² <http://www.iscoil.ie>

⁴³ http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/home_education.html

1. Member States should promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through EU cultural sector programmes and their domestic cultural sector programmes.
2. Member States should seek to exploit the considerable investment in Repositories both nationally and at EU level.
3. Member States should promote to schools (especially publicly-funded schools) the benefits of making resources available under an appropriate open license.
4. Member States should ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.
5. Member States should ensure that any public outputs from their respective national research and teaching development programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license (in particular a Creative Commons open license).
6. Member States must require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.
7. Member States should ensure that their Quality Assurance or materials approval processes permit that OER are allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists, subject to fulfilling relevant criteria.
8. Member States should consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. This panel should include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts.
9. Member States should consider establishing a specialist OER function/post to undertake an in-country cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy.
10. Member States should establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help teachers and administrators understand the uses and benefits of OER and open licensing.
11. Member States should continue their focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that they are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER.
12. Where Member States (or institutions) are providing digital devices to learners they should ensure that all considerations have been taken to maximise the effectiveness (economically and pedagogically) of devices, support and strategy with regards to OER.
13. Member States should develop their understanding of how new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) impact on quality assurance and recognition.
14. Member States should fund research into the verifiable benefits and disadvantages of OER, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on online learning, and pedagogy.
15. Member States should support research covering Repositories, Federations, Portals and Tools and within that context should consider off-campus learning (both institutional – virtual schools – and self-directed or home-tutor led) as well as on-campus.
16. Member States should support research which seeks to inform greater understanding of the success/fail factors behind OER Repositories – particularly the influence of the various approaches to quality assurance.
17. Member States should foster research into potentially sustainable business models for OER, integrating this with their ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.
18. Member States should explore the means by which closer, enduring collaboration can be fostered between Higher Education researchers and the schools sector with the objective of increasing the research evidence-base concerning OER in schools and developing a culture of two-way discourse and sharing between the schools and HE sectors.

POERUP specific recommendations for OER in Ireland's schools

We select from the above rather long list and the priorities already expressed by the Ireland government to come up with the following nine recommendations. Key ones are as usual in bold.

1. The Irish Government should promote to schools, teachers and students the availability and accessibility of open resources created through EU cultural sector programmes and its national cultural sector programmes.
2. **The Irish Government should ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials, possibly in collaboration with publishers.**
3. The Irish Government should ensure that any public outputs from their respective national research and teaching development programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license (in particular a Creative Commons open license).
4. **The Irish Government should ensure that their Quality Assurance or materials approval processes permit that OER are allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists, subject to fulfilling relevant criteria.**
5. The Irish Government must require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.
6. **The Irish Government should continue their focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that it is able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER.**
7. The Irish Government should fund research into the verifiable benefits and disadvantages of OER in schools, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on online learning and pedagogy.
8. The Irish Government should explore the means by which closer, enduring collaboration can be fostered between Higher Education researchers and the schools sector with the objective of increasing the research evidence-base concerning OER in schools and developing a culture of two-way discourse and sharing between the schools and HE sectors.
9. **Target areas for the use of OER in schools should include:**
 - **literacy and numeracy**
 - **Irish-medium education⁴⁴**
 - **online material including OER to support teaching and learning at Leaving Certificate level, especially but not only in mathematics⁴⁵**
 - **Support for homeschooled children, both directly and via institutions such as iScoil**
 - **employability in the context of 21st century skills**

POERUP Deliverable D4.2S *Policy advice for OER uptake in schools* gives much more detail.

⁴⁴ LangOER may have useful input – <http://langoer.eun.org>

⁴⁵ The SCHOLAR programme in Scotland merits attention – <http://scholar.hw.ac.uk>

Annex: Relevant Agencies

Central Applications Office (CAO)

The Central Applications Office is the agency to which the higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland have delegated the task of processing centrally applications to their first year undergraduate courses.⁴⁶

The participating institutions retain the function of making decisions on admissions. CAO is required to deal with applications in an efficient and fair manner. CAO is a not-for-profit company registered in Ireland.

Department of Education and Skills

The Department of Education and Skills is the department of the Irish state with responsibility for education and training.⁴⁷ Its mission is to provide high-quality education, which will:

- Enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and
- Contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

In pursuit of this mission, the Department has the following high-level goals:

- To promote equity and inclusion
- To promote quality outcomes
- To promote lifelong learning
- To plan for education that is relevant to personal, social, cultural and economic need
- To enhance the capacity of the Department of Education and Skills for service delivery, policy formulation, research and evaluation.

In support of these high-level goals, the Department is engaged in a wide range of activities covering the key elements of policy planning, quality assurance, resourcing, regulation and evaluation, as well as providing a broad range of support services for the education sector.

Education and Training Boards Ireland

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative association for Ireland's sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs).⁴⁸

ETBs and ETBI came into establishment on 1 July 2013 and were formerly VECs and IVEA respectively.

HEAnet

HEAnet is the national education and research network of Ireland.⁴⁹ HEAnet's e-infrastructure services underpin academic research and education activity in Ireland with approximately 200,000 students and staff (third-level) and approximately 800,000 students and staff (first and second-level) relying on the HEAnet network.

Established in 1983 by the Irish Universities with the support of the Higher Education Authority, HEAnet provides e-Infrastructure service across all levels of the Irish education system. Its network connects all Irish Universities, all Institutes of Technology, other higher education institutions (HEIs)

⁴⁶ <http://www.cao.ie>

⁴⁷ <http://www.education.ie/en/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.etbi.ie>

⁴⁹ <http://www.heanet.ie>

and research organisations, in addition to all primary and post-primary schools across Ireland. HEAnet connects these Irish learners and researchers to the Internet, online educational resources, and to fellow national educational and research networks in Europe, the USA and the rest of the world.

Higher Education Authority

The Higher Education Authority is the statutory planning and policy development body for higher education and research in Ireland.⁵⁰ It is the statutory funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of other designated institutions and is the advisory body to the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to the higher education sector.

Higher Education Colleges Association

The Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) is an association of respected, independent, private providers of quality higher level education.⁵¹ The association was formed in 1991 to represent the interests of its member colleges and their students. HECA members currently provide higher education for approximately 21,000 students.

Current HECA membership comprises most of the major independent colleges in the country.

Institutes of Technology Ireland

Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) is the representative body for 13 of Ireland's Institutes of Technology.⁵² The Institutes of Technology operate a unique system in that they allow students to progress from two-year (associate degree programmes) through primary degree to Masters and PhD.

Institutes of Technology awards are integrated with the highest award levels of the Irish National Qualification Framework which in turn is aligned to the Bologna Framework.

Irish Research Council (IRCSET and IRCHSS)

The mission of the Irish Research Council is to enable and sustain a vibrant research community in Ireland.⁵³ The Council was established in 2012 through the merging of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) and the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET).

Irish Universities Association

The Irish Universities' Association (IUA) is the representative body of the heads of the seven Irish universities (that is, those in the Republic of Ireland).⁵⁴ It does not include the Institutes of Technology.

IUA is a non-profit making body created in the late 1970s as the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) and was formally incorporated in 1997 with charitable status and adopted its current name in 2005.

The mission of the IUA is to collectively formulate and pursue policies which advance education and research in the universities of the Republic of Ireland.

⁵⁰ <http://www.heai.ie/en/about-hea>

⁵¹ <http://www.heca.ie>

⁵² <http://www.ioti.ie/about-us/about-us>

⁵³ <http://research.ie>

⁵⁴ <http://www.iua.ie>

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was established on a statutory basis in 2001.⁵⁵ Before that, it was a non-statutory organisation for over 20 years. Its mission is to:

- advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment from early childhood to the end of second level
- engage with learners, teachers, practitioners, parents and others to support innovation in schools and other educational settings
- undertake, use and share research as a basis for advice and debate on education.

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education has been established by the Minister for Education and Skills in order to enhance the quality of the learning experience for all students at third level, be they full-time, part-time or flexible learners.⁵⁶ The Forum calls together all of those involved in shaping third-level teaching and learning in Ireland in order to support and develop excellent practices in teaching and learning already underway in many of our colleges. The National Forum will engage with leaders, managers and teachers across all institutes of education at third level in Ireland.

PDST

PDST Technology in Education promotes and supports the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in first and second level schools. It is part of the national support service, the Professional Development Service for Teachers, which operates under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills.⁵⁷ The functions of the PDST Technology in Education were previously the responsibility of the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). The NCTE was integrated into the PDST in June 2012.

The PDST is managed by the Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC).

The main functions of PDST Technology in Education (formerly NCTE) fall into two categories:

- Providing a range of ICT-related support services to schools
- Policy development, strategic and administrative functions

The offices are based in Dublin City University campus in Glasnevin.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

On 6 November 2012, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland completed its amalgamation with HETAC, FETAC and the IUQB and a new integrated agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), was established.⁵⁸ FETAC, HETAC and the NQAI are now dissolved. The new agency will continue to provide continuity of service as it evolves.

QQI is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), an umbrella organisation which represents quality assurance organisations from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) member states.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ http://www.ncca.ie/en/About_Us/

⁵⁶ <http://teachingandlearning.ie>

⁵⁷ <http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/ABOUT-US/>

⁵⁸ <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/Quality-and-Qualifications-Ireland-QQI-.html>

⁵⁹ <http://www.enqa.eu>

SOLAS

SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) is the new Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland. It is responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating training and further education programmes.⁶⁰

It was formally established on 27 October 2013 by the Minister for Education and Skills.

State Examinations Commission

The State Examinations Commission is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the second-level examinations of the Irish state: the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. The State Examinations Commission is a non-departmental public body under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills.⁶¹

Teaching Council

The Teaching Council is the regulator of the teaching profession and promotes professional standards in teaching.⁶² It acts in the interests of the public good while upholding and enhancing the reputation and status of the teaching profession

Universities Ireland

The nine universities on the island of Ireland have established Universities Ireland, a new ‘umbrella’ body to promote co-operation and collaboration among universities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and to enhance their reputations internationally.⁶³

The new organisation was launched by the university presidents in July 2003 and will undertake work in a number of designated areas. These include:

- Research projects to improve North-South inter-university co-operation, e.g. on the harmonisation of regulations (see below)
- Conferences on matters of common interest to universities on the island, e.g. e-learning
- Work on ‘branding’ the Irish universities abroad, and improving the island of Ireland’s profile in the international student recruitment market
- Development of university-industry links, technology and research transfer on an ‘island of Ireland’ basis
- Staff development and training issues

Universities Ireland is funded by an annual levy paid by the nine universities, and by grants from the Department of Education and Science in Dublin, the Department for Employment and Learning in Belfast and InterTradeIreland.

The Council of Universities Ireland consists of the nine university presidents, with representatives from the Department of Education and Science, the Department for Employment and Learning and InterTradeIreland present as observers.

Former agencies

FETAC and HETAC – see QQI

HETAC – see QQI

IRCSET and IRCHSS – see Irish Research Council

⁶⁰ <http://www.solas.ie>

⁶¹ <https://www.examinations.ie>

⁶² <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie>

⁶³ <http://www.universitiesireland.ie>