

## **'Quality and Provision in Higher Education'**

*"Over the period 2007/08 to 2014/15:*

- *There has been a fall in state grants for higher education of 38%.*
- *Overall funding for higher education has fallen by at least 13.5%.*
- *The overall number of full-time students has increased by 25%.*

*This has all resulted in an overall decrease in the total funding per student of 22% (from €11,000 to €9,000). At the same time the numbers employed in higher education institutions fell by 13%. In real terms the situation is worse because if we had maintained staffing ratios as they were at the beginning of the crisis we have effectively taken 4,000 staff out of the system."*

*Tom Boland-former CE of the HEA, 2016*

There is real and legitimate concern about quality and provision in Irish higher education. Some commentators refer to a 'crisis' or 'emergency' and some institutions suggesting that staffing-levels, work-overload, and demands to find funding from sources other than the public purse could even lead to some high-profile programmes in Irish universities losing professional accreditation. Staff in university departments have indicated that despite all attempts to avoid a direct impact on students, this cannot be upheld, many initiatives to introduce more technology-based teaching and learning have stalled, and facilities and infrastructure are deteriorating as a result of the pressures on the system. [QQI 2016] Quality reviews, student surveys, employer surveys all reflect these deep concerns. At the same time, and despite the evidence, government has yet failed to act to provide any comprehensive and sustainable strategy for the funding of higher education. It will take the combined efforts of professional bodies, trade unions and students to achieve movement and IFUT will remain at the centre of these efforts as the representative body for university teachers. The pressure required needs to be enduring in the face of prevarication and needs constant new energy which is why we take up this long-standing theme again at our Annual Delegate Conference in 2019.