

## **International Faculty Forum in Environmental Health** June 18<sup>th</sup> 2006

The 2006 Faculty Forum was hosted by the Dublin Institute of Technology at the School of Food Science and Environmental Health. It was attended by 42 delegates from 9 countries.

The schedule of events and papers is attached.

Topics covered in papers were-

- Meeting the Environmental Health Workforce Needs  
NEHS&PAC and AEHAP Reverse a Decade Long Trend
- An Integrated Approach to Educating Working Environmental Health Professionals
- Transforming environmental health education to meet the demands of new challenges in South Africa
- Quality Assurance in EHO Training – a Scottish Perspective
- Teaching and learning styles in environmental health: Role Play in Health and Safety Enforcement Teaching.
- Developing the Reflective Practitioner-The Case for Problem-based Learning in Environmental Health Teaching
- Arrangement for Environmental Health Education

### **International Recognition of Qualifications**

At the previous Faculty Forum meeting in Durban in 2004, a working party was formed to explore the matter of international recognition of qualifications. This has proved a more difficult task than was anticipated and there was only limited progress made between 2004 and 2006.

The matter was again discussed at the 2006 Forum. A wide range of views were expressed on the topic during a long discussion and the Forum reconvened the following day to try to advance the matter. While there seem to be definite advantages in principle to having an approach in respect of the wide range of environmental health qualifications, the practice of how this could be achieved is certainly problematic. Advantages of having some sort of international arrangement in place would include guidance for designing new and reviewing existing programmes, identifying issues for validating and accrediting bodies, easing opportunities for students to transfer to other programmes and assessment of foreign qualifications for employment purposes.

There was widespread recognition that any approach taken must give adequate latitude for colleges, professional bodies and employers to seek to have arrangements in place to suit their particular needs and that a “one size fits all” approach of trying to develop a detailed template of academic and professional requirements that would be expected to be used worldwide is unrealistic. Several countries and professional bodies have carried out exercises recently looking at attributes/competencies/qualifications required of an environmental health professional.

At the end of the discussion, it was agreed that the matter should be explored by a group co-ordinated by DIT personnel. This group is to produce a document for circulation and comment to members of the Faculty Forum (the timescale for this would be a matter of months). The group will only look at the qualification that would entitle the holder to work as in the State sector as a professional environmental health professional (not technician or the wide range of personnel in environmental health- related capacities). It is the wish of the Faculty Forum to reach a conclusion on this matter as promptly as possible and to inform International Federation of Environmental Health of this.

The working group have met or communicated several times since the Forum and are making progress.

#### **Comments in relation to the Forum**

This Forum is an excellent opportunity for academics to meet, exchange views and discuss developments in environmental health education. However, a limiting factor in attendance of academics is the timing of the Forum. While there are enormous advantages associating it with World Congress, May/June is the busiest time of the year for academics in many countries (with the main cycle of examination-related activities taking place). When World Congress takes place at this time, it results in some academics having to miss the Forum (and also World Congress). A number of attendees at this year's Forum came to Dublin for a few hours on the Sunday for Forum and then had to return to their colleges by Monday and expressed their disappointment.