Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report:

Dundalk Institute of Technology

About this assessment

This report details the findings of the assessment conducted by an Assessment Panel on behalf of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) of Dundalk Institute of Technology's IEM Application Statement (IEMAS), which was submitted to QQI as part of the provider's application for authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. The desk assessment was conducted by the following Assessment Panel:

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Achim Hopbach	Chairperson	International Higher Education Consultant, Austria
Majella Thomas	Report writer/Secretary	Senior QA and Compliance Manager, RMIT, Australia
Dr Fabrizio Trifiró	International Education Expert	Times Higher Education / INQAAHE, United
Dhanushi Rodrigo	Learner	Atlantic Technological University, Ireland

Outcome of the assessment

This assessment evaluates the provider's compliance with the criteria set out in the Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners (HE Code). From the evidence provided by the provider in the self-assessment document, the IEM Application Statement (IEMAS), the Assessment Panel concludes that the provider should be:

Outcome	Please tick
Authorised to use TrustEd Ireland Mark	✔
Not Authorised to use TrustEd Ireland Mark	

Please see below a summary of the outcome by HE Code principle (5.1-5.6)

5.1 Marketing and Recruitment:

Principle: HE providers recruit international learners in a transparent and ethical manner. In their marketing and promotional materials, they ensure that clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date information is provided.

5.1.1 (a) HE providers shall endeavour proactively to understand the information needs of prospective international learners.

5.1.1 (b) HE providers shall ensure that information provided to potential international learners about the institution and its provision is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date. This shall include information about the intended purpose of the provision e.g., to prepare a learner for further study or specific employment. Where necessary, it should also include information on associated immigration requirements, including requirements for learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permission.

5.1.1 (c) Where applicable, information should also be provided on the professional accreditation status of programmes.

5.1.1 (d) Where applicable, information on practice placement requirements, and how these may be fulfilled, should also be made be known to prospective international learners.

5.1.1 (e) HE providers shall be compliant with information for learner requirements, as set out in Section 67 of the 2012 Act as amended. They shall confirm:
(i)   whether or not the successful completion of the programme entitles the learner to an award;
(ii)   the awarding body making the award;
(iii)   the title of the award;
(iv)   whether the award is one that is included within the NFQ;
(v)   the level at which the award is included within the NFQ;
(vi)   whether the award is a major, minor, special purpose or supplemental award, as identified within the NFQ;
(vii)   the procedures for access, transfer and progression that are in place, including the pathways for international learners for further study, employment, and residency, where applicable (see also section 4.2 above);
(viii) details, where appropriate, of the arrangements in place for the protection of enrolled learners under Section 65 of the 2012 Act as amended (see section 4.5.2 above and Appendix Two of this code).

5.1.1 (f) HE providers shall ensure that information is provided in a way that is accessible to international learners and assists them in making informed decisions. This information should support international learners in understanding all matters related to a programme prior to enrolment. If provided in a different language, it is the responsibility of the HE provider to ensure that the information is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date.

5.1.1 (g) HE providers shall accurately represent their organisation and facilities in all marketing and promotional materials and ensure that no false or misleading information is issued.

5.1.1 (h) HE providers shall provide appropriate contact details for an appropriate person or persons to provide assistance with queries from international learners prior to enrolment.

5.1.1 (i) HE providers shall state the commencement dates for all programmes.

5.1.2 (a) Prior to enrolment, HE providers shall ensure the availability and provision of relevant financial information pertaining to the study and average subsistence costs of their programme provision, from the period of enrolment through to graduation.

5.1.2 (b) Prior to enrolment, HE providers shall ensure that the learner is made aware of any insurance requirements, e.g., medical or travel insurance, and of the availability of accommodation, and any accommodation services provided.

5.1.2 (c) HE providers shall have a written agreement with each education agent, recruitment partner or consultant that formally represents their programme provision.

5.1.2 (d) HE providers shall ensure that any contractual arrangements entered with an education agent, recruitment partner or consultant incorporate the principles of the London Statement. Existing contracts that do not incorporate these principles shall be amended appropriately within two years of the date of the HE provider's application for authorisation to use the IEM.

5.1.2 (e) The contract between the HE provider and education agent, recruitment partner or consultant shall include a termination clause in instances where the agent does not comply with the principles of the London Statement or is found to have acted in an unethical fashion to the detriment of international learners.

5.1.2 (f) HE providers shall conduct due diligence e.g., three reference checks, to verify the track record of education agents, recruitment partners or consultants, in relation to learner protection issues, prior to entering into a contractual agreement.

5.1.2 (g) HE providers shall ensure that all education agents, recruitment partners or consultants contracted to them are in possession of accurate and up to date information regarding the provider and its provision.

5.1.2 (h) HE providers shall have in place a transparent process for monitoring and reviewing the activities of education agents, recruitment partners or consultants including, where appropriate, feedback from applicants, to ensure that the education agent, recruitment partner or consultant is operating within the spirit of the HE Code and the London Statement.

5.1.2 (i) HE providers required to put in place arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners under Section 65 of the 2012 Act as amended shall do so prior to the recruitment of learners (see also section 4.5 and Appendix Two of this HE code).

Summary

The panel agrees with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) that 17 out of 18 criteria associated with Principle 5.1 Marketing and Recruitment are applicable. The panel does not agree with DkIT's assessment that it fully complies with 15 out of 17 criteria. The panel found that DkIT complies with 14 of the 17 criteria associated with this principle.

DkIT provides information to international learners about the institute, its programmes, facilities and the range of supports and services via a variety of communication methods, including: the website, prospectuses, and agents. Clear, accurate, transparent and easily accessible information is provided about programme aims, pathways to employment and further study, professional accreditation status, the award and its place within the NFQ and study commencement dates. One area for further enhancement is the accessibility and clarity of practice placement requirements. Currently information is spread over a number of sites, with a brief overview of practice placement requirements set out on relevant programme pages, a more detailed overview available on the work placement page, and a comprehensive overview provided in the Work Placement Common Procedures on the Academic Policies and Guidelines webpage. To enable prospective international students to make informed decisions about their study, they require accurate information on mandatory practice placements requirements such as garda vetting, and vaccinations, prior to accepting an offer, so that they can determine whether they will be able to complete the programme and potentially achieve registration with the professional accrediting body (where applicable). DkIT is encouraged to ensure that this information is easily accessible for prospective learners by including it in offer letters, on programme pages, via a link from

programme pages or similar.

Recommendation 1:

5.1.1 (d): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that prospective learners are provided with clear, easily accessible information on all mandatory requirements related to practice placements before enrolment.

DkIT has put in place mechanisms to gain feedback from selected agents and students to ensure it is meeting the needs of prospective students, as required by criterion 5.1.1 (a). However, there are no regular, systematic feedback mechanisms that could provide actionable insights from all agents and students and thus support continuous improvement. DkIT engages with selected agents as part of its international market visits and business as usual work and runs focus groups with current students to gain insights into students' experiences of agents and their satisfaction with studying in Ireland. Actions arising from these focus groups are then provided as feedback to individual agents. DkIT should consider other initiatives such as a survey of all international students on the range of pre-enrolment information they receive (including that delivered in Mandarin), and periodic website user testing with a range of cohorts, including international cohorts.

Recommendation 2:

5.1.1 (a) and 5.1.1 (f): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing a range of regular formal mechanisms to seek feedback from all agents and all international students and uses the outcomes of these to create and implement actionable insights to support continuous improvement and ensure DkIT continues to meet the information needs of prospective international learners.

DkIT provides updated programme information to agents annually, and all agent marketing materials are reviewed and checked by International Recruitment staff in advance of their release. However, there doesn't appear to be an annual review or audit of information across all communication channels to ensure that it remains current, easily accessible, accurate, and compliant with the provisions of the HE Code. This would strengthen compliance with 5.1.1 (g).

Recommendation 3:

5.1.1 (g): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing robust processes to regularly review information provided to prospective international learners about the institution and its provision to ensure it is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date.

DkIT's agents also work with a network of sub-agents, however it is not clear that the agent's

contractual obligations also apply to the sub-agents, or that due diligence processes review how sub-agents are managed. DkIT is encouraged to review its procedures for sub-agents to ensure that they are clear and provide assurance that such agents are appropriately governed.

Recommendation 4:

5.1.2 (c): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that its agreements cover sub-agents and that sub-agent governance is considered in the due diligence process.

DkIT is currently partially compliant with 5.1.2 (d) and 5.1.2 (e), which require that contractual agreements incorporate the principles of the London Statement and include a termination clause in cases where the agent does not comply with these principles or is found to have acted in an unethical way. The panel is confident that the provider's plans for compliance are feasible.

Condition 1:

5.1.2 (d): DkIT must revise all its regional representative agreements to incorporate the principles of the London Statement within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Condition 2:

5.1.2 (e): DkIT must revise all its regional representative agreements within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark to include a termination clause in instances where the agent does not comply with the principles of the London Statement or is found to have acted in an unethical fashion to the detriment of international learners.

DkIT's agent monitoring and review process focuses on a number of important indicators, including the quality of applications submitted, conversion rates, and visa processing delays and rejections. However, it does not encompass the full intent and spirit of the HE Code, and the London Statement as required by the criterion. DkIT should revise its current process to ensure it is comprehensive and includes student feedback and complaints and provides assurance that prospective learners are protected. DkIT is encouraged to benchmark its approach against best practice and to include elements such as student success (completions, attrition rate), agent attendance at training and knowledge of the university.

Condition 3:

5.1.2 (h): DkIT must revise its annual monitoring and review process to fully encompass the intent and spirit of the HE Code and London Statement within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition:
HE providers operate fair, transparent and consistent admission policies that support the successful participation of international learners in their chosen programmes
5.2 (a) HE providers shall clearly specify entry requirements for international learners that support the successful participation of the learners in their chosen programmes.
5.2 (b) HE providers' entry requirements shall clearly specify English language proficiency requirements for applicants whose first language is not English. These should include references to the benchmarks used in assessing proficiency requirements and, like other entry requirements, support the successful participation of international learners in their chosen programmes.
5.2 (c) HE providers shall adopt the principles, and follow the guidance, contained in the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and subsidiary texts in assessing the qualifications presented by international learners for the purpose of admission to their programmes. Qualifications should be assessed in an accessible and fair manner and within a reasonable timeframe.
5.2 (d) HE providers should recognise qualifications that are recognised for the purpose of access to programmes in an international applicant's own higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated between the requirements for admission in the applicant's own higher education system and those of the Irish HE provider.
5.2 (e) HE providers shall provide a timely written response to international applicants who are refused admission.
5.2 (f) Where a HE provider decides to withhold recognition of a qualification from an international learner for the purpose of admission, the reasons for the refusal to grant recognition shall be stated, and information provided concerning possible measures the applicant may take to obtain recognition at a later stage. If a HE provider decides to withhold recognition of a qualification for the purpose of admission, or if no decision is taken, the applicant shall be able to make an appeal within a reasonable time limit.
5.2 (g) HE providers shall support QQI, as appropriate, in implementing its statutory function to facilitate the recognition outside the state of awards made in the state, including the home countries of their international learners.
Summary

The panel agrees with DkIT that seven out of seven criteria associated with Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition are applicable. The panel concurs with DkIT's assessment of full compliance with six of the seven criteria.

DkIT clearly specifies entry requirements, including English language proficiency requirements, on programme pages with English language proficiency requirements also published in the mini guide, application guidelines shared with recruitment partners, and at prospective student events.

DkIT has developed a draft International Admissions Policy to govern international admissions and to establish the minimum entry requirements for international applicants. The policy is scheduled for approval by Academic Council in September 2025 and this will bring DkIT into full compliance with 5.2 (a). The panel is confident that the provider's plan for compliance is feasible.

Condition 4:
5.2 (a): DkIT must finalise the draft International Admissions Policy and bring it to Academic Council

for approval within 6 months of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

To provide assurance that entry requirements support the successful participation of learners, DkIT undertook a review of student progression between 2021-2024. While this is encouraging, the panel notes that this is high level and does not include a cohort analysis at programme level to understand whether entry criteria or English language requirements support student success. An annual review combined with feedback from academic departments and support services (as noted in the IEMAS), could provide assurance that entry requirements support student success, and assist in identifying areas for improvement or adjustments to admission standards.

Recommendation 5:

5.2 (b): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing an annual review of entry requirements, including English language requirements, using a range of data sources including student progression data, to provide assurance that entry requirements support student success. The outcomes should be reported to relevant governance bodies.

DkIT adheres to the LRC principles when assessing the qualifications of prospective international learners. It has a clear process which includes benchmarking of international qualifications against NARIC Ireland and procedures where it is determined that a substantial difference exists. Where a decision has been made to withhold recognition of an applicant's qualifications they are informed in a timely manner. These timeframes are set out in the draft international Admission policy.

While DkIT provides applicants who have been refused admission with timely notification, neither the draft International Admission Policy or the rechecks and academic appeals webpage sets out admissions appeal mechanisms or information on the process to submit an admission appeal. Information on appeals should at a minimum include: the basis on which applicants can appeal, timeframes (for both submission and review of the appeal by DkIT), application forms, advice, support, any legal or regulatory texts and possible measures the applicant may take to obtain recognition at a later stage.

Recommendation 6:

5.2 (f): The panel recommends that DkIT consider providing in its communications to international applicants that have been refused admission, detailed information to support those who wish to appeal DkIT's refusal to recognise their qualifications for the purposes of admission. This information should be written in plain English, be easy to access, and clearly detail the process, possible options, and avenues for advice and support.

Principle 5.3 Fees, Refunds and Subsistence:

HE providers provide all learners with clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date information on all study costs, including subsistence and accommodation. HE providers shall inform learners about fees and other costs associated with undertaking a programme of study in Ireland

5.3.1 (a) HE providers shall provide information on compulsory fees for the full duration of the programme from registration and admission to graduation or exit from the programme. Where fees may change, this shall be clear to applicants in the information provided.

5.3.1 (b) HE providers shall provide information on the collection or payment of fees, including sanctions for late payment and debt collection for moneys owed.

5.3.1 (c) HE providers shall establish a fees structure that supports the mission of the organization and reflects the costs associated with quality provision.

5.3.1 (d) HE providers shall ensure that there are no additional fees or unexpected charges that international learners have not been made aware of.

5.3.1 (e) HE providers shall issue a receipt to international learners upon receipt of payment of fees which will include a breakdown of fees paid.

5.3.1 (f) HE providers shall establish and publish a procedure on full and partial refunds. This procedure shall outline the conditions under which a refund will be granted e.g., a refused entry visa application, in the case of a non-EU/EEA Swiss learner.

5.3.1 (g) HE providers shall provide information on any financial supports or resources that exist within the organisation, or nationally, for international learners.

5.3.2 (a) HE providers shall provide information on the indicative costs of studying on their programmes e.g., the costs of textbooks, electronic resources, computer requirements, protective equipment.

5.3.2 (b) HE providers shall furnish prospective learners with general advice regarding the average cost of living e.g., accommodation, food, transport and medical care, for the programme duration.

5.3.2   (c) HE providers shall provide information on:
  (i)   fees for accommodation services, if offered by the HE provider or other accommodation service providers;
  (ii) fees for complaints and appeals procedures as relevant e.g., rechecking of exam results.

5.3.2 (d) HE providers shall provide information on any other costs related to the provision of student services as considered relevant by the provider.

Summary

Eleven of the 11 criteria here are applicable to DkIT, and they are compliant across all criteria.

DkIT's provision of information on study costs, including subsistence and accommodation, is generally clear, accurate, transparent, relevant and current. DkIT has processes to check that the information continues to meet the needs of learners and support their decision-making, and to assure itself of the validity and transparency of information. While the panel did not identify any major deficits in the way that information is delivered to international students, a number of recommendations are provided to support enhancement and continuous improvement. DkIT fees for international students are published on the website, offer letter, and in all relevant marketing materials, brochures and communications. However, published fees are annual fees and do not reflect the full cost of the degree from admission through to graduation (i.e. annual fees x years of study). Full disclosure of both annual and total indicative costs would provide clarity to students and

facilitate forward financial planning.

Recommendation 7:

5.3.1 (a): The panel recommends that DkIT consider providing international students with information on compulsory fees for the full duration of the program from registration and admission through to graduation.

DkIT has a hardship fund in place to support international students in temporary or acute need triggered by an unforeseen event such as an accident, illness or bereavement which may incur additional costs to the student. However the existence of and information about the fund is not publicly available and students are only informed of the fund once they contact the pastoral care office. This means that some students who do not take these steps will not be able to access this support when they require it.

Recommendation 8:

5.3.1 (g): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that international students are provided with clear and easily accessible information on the hardship fund.

Principle 5.4 Supports and Services for International Learners
HE providers shall foster a supportive environment which supports the wellbeing and integration of all learners into the student body and ensures a positive learning experience for all learners
5.4.1 (a) HE providers shall designate appropriate personnel to be responsible for inquiries about learner support issues from international learners e.g., course coordinator, counsellor, or international officer.
5.4.1 (b) HE providers shall offer information to international learners prior to their arrival to help them adjust to their new surroundings e.g., information on transport, banking, availability of accommodation and accommodation services.
5.4.1 (c) HE providers shall ensure that inductions offered to learners also meet the needs of international learners, including intercultural awareness. They should direct learners to services, supports and facilities relevant or appropriate to their programme of study. They should also remind international learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permissions of their responsibilities under the Department of Justice's student immigration regime.
5.4.1 (d) The induction programme shall be provided to all cohorts of international learners who register or enrol at various times of the year, including learners who access programmes through advanced entry.
5.4.1 (e) HE providers shall provide information on appropriate learner supports and services to facilitate learner integration into the wider HE community.
5.4.1 (f) HE providers shall ensure that international learners are aware of opportunities to participate in, and be represented at, engagements between the provider and the learner body. Where possible, they should provide, in collaboration with learner representative bodies, information on national learner engagement initiatives and opportunities for international learners to avail of training opportunities.

5.4.1 (g) HE providers shall have mechanisms in place to support international learners financially in instances of personal or other emergency or hardship.
5.4.1 (h) HE providers shall facilitate and encourage feedback from international learners on the delivery of any supports and services. This includes informing learners about complaints processes for these services.
5.4.1 (i) Institutional approaches to quality assuring learner services and supports will include all learners, including international learners.
5.4.2 (a) HE providers shall offer induction that is accessible to all learners and, where appropriate, tailored to the needs of international learners. They shall provide full information and advice on all relevant institutional and academic policies.
5.4.2 (b) Induction shall be provided to learners and cohorts who enrol at different points during the year, including those accessing programmes through advanced entry.
5.4.2 (c) HE providers shall ensure the information provided at induction is easily accessible throughout the academic year and shall offer reminders of this information at key points during the year e.g., in the lead-up to examinations or submission of assignments.
5.4.2 (d) HE providers will include academic integrity as a core component of induction for all learners, including international learners. Recognition will be given in inductions to the different education cultures of international learners, and the content, advice and support they impart will be relevant and specific to the Irish higher education context. Formal and informal conversations about academic integrity should be held on an ongoing basis throughout the period of enrolment of all learners, including international learners.
5.4.2 (e) HE providers shall endeavour to integrate their international learners, through their inductions and through their policies, procedures, and services, into the wider learner community.
5.4.2 (f) HE providers shall continue to provide staff with training and support to facilitate an appropriate and effective delivery of programmes and services to international learners. This should include, where appropriate, training in intercultural competence and support for the development of English language education competence.

Summary

The panel does not agree with DkIT that 14 out of 15 criteria associated with Principle 5.4 Supports and Services for International Learners are applicable. The panel considers that all 15 criteria are applicable to DkIT. The panel does not concur with DkIT's assessment of full compliance with all applicable criteria. The panel considers that DkIT is compliant with 14 out of 15 criteria.

DkIT provides staff, and a range of support, services and facilities to support learner integration into the wider university and local community and to assist students in their transition to study and life in Ireland and throughout their study. The supports include induction, financial support and academic integrity awareness and education.

Prior to arriving in Ireland, commencing students are provided with an email setting out key information, while students coming through agents are also provided with pre-departure briefings. Once students arrive in Ireland, the international office provides them with an induction (welcome days) that covers services, supports, immigration requirements and intercultural awareness. International students commencing in September are also provided with academic induction, however there are no measures to provide international learners who may join at other points in the year with a comprehensive induction to the full range of available services and supports, beyond

academic induction. While acknowledging that the full orientation experience may not be feasible due to student numbers, DkIT is encouraged to explore options to provide an equivalent experience for these students, for example, via enrolment in an online module or smaller dedicated induction sessions. DkIT conducts annual focus groups with a representative sample of international students on the adequacy of its welcome days. It uses this information to support continuous improvement.

Recommendation 9:

5.4.1 (d): The panel recommends that DkIT consider putting in place measures to ensure that international learners who may join at other points throughout the year receive a comprehensive induction to the full range of available services, beyond academic induction.

To provide assurance that institutional supports and services are appropriate, DkIT relies on data from annual surveys conducted by the HEA on the experiences of Irish HE students. While this data can be useful in providing general insights, it does not capture the specific experiences of international students or the complexities of their interactions with supports and services. DkIT is encouraged to explore a range of options to gather feedback from students on their experiences with university supports and services, noting that its international student focus groups look primarily at the pre- and post-arrival experiences.

Condition 5:

5.4.1 (h): DkIT must implement mechanisms to facilitate feedback from all international students on their experiences of using institutional supports and services within 1 year of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. Where institution-wide surveys are conducted, international students should be able to be identified as a distinct cohort to provide insights into the specific experience of international students.

Cultural awareness training workshops for staff have been organised in the past by DkIT's International Office in partnership with ICOS (Irish Council for Overseas Students) to develop staff's intercultural competence in supporting students from the Middle East, who were new learners at the Institute at that time. DkIT plans to host staff cultural training again in the 2025/2026 academic year, making it a requirement for new staff and/or where there are international students registering from new target markets. All current English language staff have completed ESOL qualifications at Queen's University Belfast (MA TESOL or Higher Cert. TESOL).

Commendation 1:

5.4.3: The panel commends DkIT's commitment to ensuring staff are adequately trained in intercultural competence, including the requirement for new staff of the institute, and/or where international students are registering from new target markets, to take a cultural awareness training

workshop.

Principle 5.5 English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes

The English language supports provided by HE providers to international learners, including through the provision of international foundation year programmes, are underpinned by a coherent and transparent institutional policy approach.

5.5 (a) HE providers shall have an English language policy statement for international learners that shall:
- (i) document the policy approach and process to the assessment of English language proficiency entry requirements;
- (ii) document, as appropriate, the institution's policy approach to the provision, support, and development of English for Academic Purposes;
- (iii) set out the institution's policy approach to the provision of English language supports to non-native English speakers prior to commencement and throughout the duration of their higher education programmes;
- (iv) document the arrangements, including, as appropriate, the quality assurance, credit and/or awarding arrangements, for different types of EAP programmes, such as:
- pre-sessional programmes/modules,
- in-sessional programmes/modules

5.5 (b) HE providers offering international foundation year programmes shall set out in their English language policy statement for international learners
- (i) the quality assurance, credit and/or awarding arrangements for these programmes,
- (ii) the corporate and academic governance arrangements in place where such programmes are provided in partnership with other entities e.g., a private English language education provider, other independent/private education provider or campus company.

5.5 (c) For compliance with this HE Code, an international foundation programme shall lead to one of the following awards included within the NFQ:
- (i) QQI preparation for undergraduate programmes, leading to NFQ Level 5 Special Purpose Award (foundation qualification)
- (ii) QQI preparation for postgraduate programme, leading to NFQ Level 8 Special Purpose Award (foundation qualification)
- (iii) equivalent programmes leading to awards that are included within the NFQ and validated by an Irish awarding body.

5.5 (d) Where HE providers currently offer international foundation year programmes that do not lead to awards that are included within the NFQ, they must secure programme validation/course approval for such programmes through an Irish awarding body within two years of the date on which they are authorised to use the IEM.

Summary

The panel agrees with DkIT that three out of four criteria associated with Principle 5.5 English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes are applicable. The panel does not concur with DkIT's assessment of compliance with two out of three criteria. The panel considers DkIT compliant with one out of three criteria.

DkIT has developed a draft English Language Policy Statement for international learners. The policy statement sets out the English language requirements for international learners, with

reference to IELTS-requirements and internationally recognised English examinations accepted by the provider. The policy is scheduled to be submitted to Academic Council for approval in September 2025. The panel is confident that the provider's plans for compliance are feasible.

Condition 6:

5.5 (a) and 5.5 (b): DkIT must proceed with Academic Council's approval and publication of the English Language policy within 12 weeks of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

DkIT provides a range of supports for students wanting or needing to improve their academic English and pre-sessional and in-sessional certificates in English and Foundation Studies respectively. The foundation programmes are validated at DkIT's Award Standards for Level 6 programmes.

Principle 5.6 International Learners outside the State

HE providers ensure that learners outside the state who are enrolled on their programmes receive quality learning experiences, where these programmes lead to awards that are included within the NFQ, and whether they are offered in transnational education settings and/or through remote, fully online modes of learning.

5.6.1 (a) HE providers, having regard to their statutory quality assurance obligations, shall ensure that the academic quality, standard and recognition of their transnational education programmes are equivalent to the academic quality, standard and recognition of the programmes they provide within the state.

5.6.1 (b) HE providers shall apply the principles and criteria set out in this HE Code in an equivalent manner in transnational education settings, including in relation to the provision of learner support services.

5.6.1 (c) HE providers shall support QQI, as appropriate, in implementing its statutory function to facilitate the recognition outside the state of awards made in the state. This facilitatory function extends to awards included within the NFQ, where the programmes leading to these awards are provided outside the state.

5.6.1 (d) Linked providers who intend to offer transnational education programmes that lead to awards within the NFQ shall only do so with the agreement of the designated awarding body or bodies making the awards.

5.6.2 (a) HE providers, having regard to their statutory quality assurance obligations, shall ensure that the academic quality, standard and recognition of their remote online programmes are equivalent to the academic quality, standard and recognition of the programmes they provide through other teaching and learning modes.

5.6.2 (b) HE providers shall apply the principles and criteria set out in this HE Code in an equivalent manner in relation to learners outside the state enrolled on remote online programmes that lead to awards included within the NFQ, including in relation to the provision of learner support services.

5.6.2 (c) HE providers shall support QQI, as appropriate, in implementing its statutory function to facilitate the recognition outside the state of awards made in the state. This facilitatory function extends to awards included within the NFQ, where the programmes leading to these awards are offered as remote online programmes.

5.6.2 (d) Linked providers who intend to offer remote online programmes to learners outside the state that lead to awards within the NFQ shall only do so with the agreement of the designated awarding body or bodies making the awards.

Summary

The panel agrees with DkIT that six of the eight criteria associated with Principle 6 International Learners Outside the State are applicable. The panel concurs with DkIT's assessment that it is fully compliant with two out of six criteria.

DkIT has one transnational collaborative programme in development with Hebei University of Engineering in China. The programme will be delivered in full time blended learning mode. Programme modules will be delivered collaboratively by academic staff from both institutions, with the majority of teaching and learning taking place on-site at the partner university. Students will complete the programme primarily in China, with an option to transfer to DkIT for the final year of study. The programme is aligned with NFQ level 8 engineering award standards and governed by DkIT's quality assurance policies and procedures.

Transnational and partnered delivery are governed by the Policy on Collaborative Provision, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards. The policy is overdue for review having been last updated in 2016. Therefore, it does not cover this new type of provision, does not set out how the requirements of the HE Code will be met and would benefit from further information on how equivalent academic standards and recognition will be assured and how partnership monitoring and review processes will be implemented.

DkIT has indicated that policies and procedures will be updated to fully incorporate the HE Code in Semester 1 2025/2026. The panel is confident that the provider's plans are feasible.

Condition 7:
5.6.1 (b) and (c) and 5.6.2 (b) and (c): DkIT must update the Policy on Collaborative Provision, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards to ensure it meets the requirements of the HE Code and that students enrolled in this degree receive an equivalent experience to those enrolled in Ireland within, 24 weeks of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Summary of assessment outcomes

Overview of the provider's international profile and activities:

DkIT has approximately 5,000 students across four schools (Business and Humanities, Health and Science, Engineering, Informatics and Creative Arts). It delivers programmes leading to major and non-major awards from Level 6 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The Registrar and VP for Academic Affairs and the International Office are responsible for international education. The Office is responsible for international non-EU student recruitment (which includes selected EU recruitment), and the management and implementation of the Erasmus+ programme. The International Office has eight staff and is supported by the student services team of the Institute. It liaises with the Library and Student Learning and Development centre to ensure academic and other supports are provided to international learners.

DkIT has 1,001 international learners comprising 19.6% of the total student population. Of these, 10.3% (527) are non-EU learners with the top four source countries being India, Malaysia, Nigeria and China, while 9.3% (474) are EU students with Czechia, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia constituting the top four source markets. DkIT does not currently have any TNE delivery, but it has one programme in development, the *Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in International Civil Engineering*, a collaborative programme with Hebei University of Engineering (China), which is in the final stages of the approval process. The proposed model will facilitate the collaborative delivery of the programme in blended learning mode with students undertaking periods of study in both jurisdictions.

DkIT's strategic plan identifies internationalisation as a key enabler of institutional growth, collaboration, and diversity. Key objectives include:

- increasing DkIT's global footprint by continuing to recruit in established markets and by diversifying recruitment opportunities into new and emerging International and EU markets, and
- continuing to promote staff and student international collaborations overseas, and developing internationalisation-at-home, in order to foster intercultural competence, develop global perspectives of students and staff, and increase student and staff participation in Erasmus+.

Arising from recent difficulties with study-visa approvals, DkIT is seeking to diversify its recruitment, to reduce over-reliance on key markets and is developing links in markets in Latin America, along with developing more university partnerships in Canada and America. It is also focused on agent-

led recruitment in Eastern Europe, particularly Czechia and Slovakia, for CAO application to Year 1 of Bachelor programmes.

Recommended condition(s) for authorisation:

Condition 1:

5.1.2 (d): DkIT must revise all its regional representative agreements to incorporate the principles of the London Statement within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Condition 2:

5.1.2 (e): DkIT must revise all its regional representative agreements within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark to include a termination clause in instances where the agent does not comply with the principles of the London Statement or is found to have acted in an unethical fashion to the detriment of international learners.

Condition 3:

5.1.2 (h): DkIT must revise its annual monitoring and review process to fully encompass the intent and spirit of the HE Code and London Statement within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Condition 4:

5.2 (a): DkIT must finalise the draft International Admissions Policy and bring it to Academic Council for approval within 6 months of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Condition 5:

5.4.1 (h): DkIT must implement mechanisms to facilitate feedback from all international students on their experiences of using institutional supports and services within 1 year of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. Where institution-wide surveys are conducted, international students should be able to be identified as a distinct cohort to provide insights into the specific experience of international students.

Condition 6:

5.5 (a) and 5.5 (b): DkIT must proceed with Academic Council's approval and publication of the English Language policy within 12 weeks of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Condition 7:

5.6.1 (b) and (c) and 5.6.2 (b) and (c): DkIT must update the Policy on Collaborative Provision,

Transnational Provision and Joint awards to ensure it meets the requirements of the HE Code and that students enrolled in this degree receive an equivalent experience to those enrolled in Ireland, within 24 weeks of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Commendations:

Commendation 1:

5.4.3: The panel commends DkIT's commitment to ensuring staff are adequately trained in intercultural competence, including the requirement for new staff of the institute, and/or where international students are registering from new target markets, to take a cultural awareness training workshop.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

5.1.1 (d): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that prospective learners are provided with clear, easily accessible information on all mandatory requirements related to practice placements before enrolment.

Recommendation 2:

5.1.1 (a) and 5.1.1 (f): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing a range of regular formal mechanisms to seek feedback from all agents and all international students and uses the outcomes of these to create and implement actionable insights to support continuous improvement and ensure DkIT continues to meet the information needs of prospective international learners.

Recommendation 3:

5.1.1 (g): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing robust processes to regularly review information provided to prospective international learners about the institution and its provision to ensure it is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date.

Recommendation 4:

5.1.2 (c): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that its agreements cover sub-agents and that sub-agent governance is considered in the due diligence process.

Recommendation 5:

5.2 (b): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing an annual review of entry requirements, including English language requirements, using a range of data sources including student progression data, to provide assurance that entry requirements support student success.

The outcomes should be reported to relevant governance bodies.

Recommendation 6:

5.2 (f): The panel recommends that DkIT consider providing in its communications to international applicants that have been refused admission, detailed information to support those who wish to appeal DkIT's refusal to recognise their qualifications for the purposes of admission. This information should be written in plain English, be easy to access, and clearly detail the process, possible options, and avenues for advice and support.

Recommendation 7:

5.3.1 (a): The panel recommends that DkIT consider providing international students with information on compulsory fees for the full duration of the program from registration and admission through to graduation.

Recommendation 8:

5.3.1 (g): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that international students are provided with clear and easily accessible information on the hardship fund.

Recommendation 9:

5.4.1 (d): The panel recommends that DkIT consider putting in place measures to ensure that international learners who may join at other points throughout the year receive a comprehensive induction to the full range of available services, beyond academic induction.

Declarations of Assessment Panel

This report has been agreed by the Assessment Panel and is signed on their behalf by the Chairperson.

Assessment Panel Chairperson: Achim Hopbach

Date: 3 October 2025

Signed:

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DUNDALK
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA
DHÚN DEALGAN

11th November 2025

Registrar's Office,
Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT),
Dublin Road,
Dundalk,
Co. Louth,
A91 K584.
Ireland.

Re: TrustED Ireland Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report- DkIT Response

To QQI International Education Division,

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) welcomes the decision of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to authorise the Institute to use the TrustEd Ireland International Education Mark (IEM), subject to the fulfilment of specified condition(s) and in consideration of the Assessment Panel's recommendations. The Institute notes the notification that was sent by QQI to DkIT on the 21st October 2025 regarding the outcome of the assessment process.

The Institute regards the authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland Mark as a significant milestone, reflecting DkIT's commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the international student experience, from pre-enrolment through to the completion of their programme of education and training, in alignment with national and international standards embodied in the Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners, the HE Code (https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2023-10/iem-01-he-code-of-practice-october-2023.pdf).

As part of the TrustEd Ireland authorisation process, the Institute was afforded the opportunity to review the draft Assessment Report for factual accuracy. This review of the assessment report was undertaken in line with QQI's guidance, recognising that the factual accuracy process is intended solely to identify and correct any factual inaccuracies or omissions, rather than to amend or reinterpret the findings of the Assessment Panel (the Factual Accuracy Report was completed as appropriate).

The Institute has considered the findings of the Assessment Panel and provides below its formal response to the condition(s) and recommendation(s) outlined in the draft assessment report (section entitled "Institute Response to Findings" below).

Progress on the fulfilment of the conditions and recommendations will be monitored on an ongoing basis with the implementation of identified actions (i.e. action plan(s)) being overseen by the Academic Quality Sub-committee (AQSC), a sub-committee of the Academic Council that reports to Council. Progress will also be formally reported to QQI in line with specified timeframes, as part of annual monitoring activities, including the Annual Quality Report (AQR). DkIT remains fully committed to continuous enhancement of its quality assurance system and

student supports for international learners, ensuring that the TrustEd Ireland standards are embedded in institutional practice.

The Institute acknowledges with appreciation the constructive and collegial manner in which the assessment process was conducted and wishes to record its thanks to the members of the Assessment Panel for the extensive and rigorous assessment of the IEM Application Statement (IEMAS). DkIT also extends its thanks to the staff at QQI, and particularly to the staff in the International Education Division for their engagement, support, and professional approach throughout the review.

Institute Response to Findings

The section provides the Institute's formal response to the conditions (seven in total) and recommendations (nine in total) detailed in the draft assessment report (The detailed response, included separately, provides proposed action(s), responsible unit(s) or office(s) and timelines for completion or implementation). Conditions and recommendations are grouped by the principles in the HE Code. DkIT notes the commendation provided.

Assessment Panel Finding	Finding No.	Description	Institute Response
HE Code-Principle 5.1 Marketing and Recruitment			
Condition	1	5.1.2(d): DkIT must revise all its regional representative agreements to incorporate the principles of the London Statement within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.	DkIT accepts this condition and will revise all regional representative agreements as they come up for renewal to embed the principles of the London Statement, ensuring ethical, transparent, and learner-centred recruitment practices.
Condition	2	5.1.2(e): DkIT must revise all its regional representative agreements within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark to include a termination clause in instances where the agent does not comply with the principles of the London Statement or is found to have acted in an unethical fashion to the detriment of international learners.	DkIT accepts this condition and will include explicit termination clauses in all regional representative agreements, as they come up for renewal, addressing non-compliance or unethical conduct, reinforcing accountability and good governance.
Condition	3	5.1.2(h): DkIT must revise its annual monitoring and review process to fully encompass the intent and spirit of the HE Code and London Statement within two years of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.	DkIT accepts this condition and will revise its annual monitoring and review framework to incorporate the principles of the HE Code and London Statement, strengthening oversight of international learner provision.
Recommendation	1	5.1.1(d): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that prospective learners are provided with clear, easily accessible information on all mandatory requirements related to practice placements before enrolment.	DkIT will review and standardise all programme and promotional materials to ensure that mandatory placement requirements are clearly and consistently communicated to prospective learners.
Recommendation	2	5.1.1(a) and 5.1.1(f): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing a range of regular	DkIT will introduce enhanced annual feedback mechanisms for agents and international students, using the findings to

		formal mechanisms to seek feedback from all agents and all international students and uses the outcomes of these to create and implement actionable insights to support continuous improvement and ensure DkIT continues to meet the information needs of prospective international learners.	inform enhancements in recruitment communication and learner support.
Recommendation	3	5.1.1(g): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing robust processes to regularly review information provided to prospective international learners about the institution and its provision to ensure it is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date.	DkIT will formalise an annual review of all international learner information to ensure accuracy and compliance with the HE Code.
Recommendation	4	5.1.2(c): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that its agreements cover sub-agents and that sub-agent governance is considered in the due diligence process.	DkIT will revise its regional representative agreements and due diligence procedures to include explicit provisions for sub-agent oversight. The sub-agent network is contracted and managed by each respective agent. DkIT agrees to continue to work with the regional agents to enhance these due diligence processes.
HE Code-Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition			
Condition	4	5.2(a): DkIT must finalise the draft International Admissions Policy and bring it to Academic Council for approval within 6 months of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.	DkIT accepts this condition and confirms that the International Admissions Policy has been ·finalised and approved by Academic Council (26th September 2025), ensuring transparent and consistent international admissions processes.
Recommendation	5	5.2(b): The panel recommends that DkIT consider implementing an annual review of entry requirements, including English language requirements, using a range of data sources including student progression data, to provide assurance that entry requirements support student success. The outcomes should be reported to relevant governance bodies.	DkIT will implement a biannual review of international entry and English language requirements using progression data (and other data sources as appropriate).
Recommendation	6	5.2(f): The panel recommends that DkIT consider providing in its communications to international applicants that have been refused admission, detailed information to support those who wish to appeal DkIT's refusal to recognise their qualifications for the purposes of admission. This	DkIT will update applicant communications and the website to include clear, plain-English guidance on admissions appeals, procedures, and available supports.

		information should be written in plain English, be easy to access, and clearly detail the process, possible options, and avenues for advice and support.	
HE Code-Principle 5.3 Fees, Refunds and Subsistence			
Recommendation	7	5.3.1(a): The panel recommends that DkIT consider providing international students with information on compulsory fees for the full duration of the programme from registration and admission through to graduation.	DkIT will publish clear, full-duration fee information for international students.
Recommendation	8	5.3.1(g): The panel recommends that DkIT consider ensuring that international students are provided with clear and easily accessible information on the hardship fund.	DkIT will enhance the communication of the hardship fund supports specifically for international students.
HE Code-Principle 5.4 Supports and Services for International Learners			
Condition	5	5.4.1(h): DkIT must implement mechanisms to facilitate feedback from all international students on their experiences of using institutional supports and services within 1 year of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. Where institution-wide surveys are conducted, international students should be able to be identified as a distinct cohort to provide insights into the specific experience of international students.	DkIT accepts this condition and will implement a dedicated international student feedback mechanism, to include supports and services, and ensure international learners are identifiable as a distinct cohort in institutional surveys.
Recommendation	9	5.4.1(d): The panel recommends that DkIT consider putting in place measures to ensure that international learners who may join at other points throughout the year receive a comprehensive induction to the full range of available services, beyond academic induction.	DkIT is already implementing this recommendation (see Factual Accuracy Report).
HE Code-Principle 5.5 English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes			
Condition	6	5.5(a) and 5.5(b): DkIT must proceed with Academic Council's approval and publication of the English Language policy within 12 weeks of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.	DkIT accepts this condition and confirms that the English Language Policy has been approved by Academic Council (September 26th, 2025).
HE Code-Principle 5.6 International Learners outside the State			
Condition	7	5.6.1(b) and (c) and 5.6.2(b) and (c): DkIT must update the Policy on Collaborative Provision, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards to ensure it meets the requirements of the HE Code and that students enrolled in this degree receive an equivalent experience to those enrolled in Ireland	DkIT accepts this condition and will revise the Policy on Collaborative, Transnational, and Joint Awards to ensure compliance with the HE Code, guaranteeing equivalence of learning experience and academic standards.

		within, 24 weeks [6 months] of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.	

Conclusion

The Institute once again expresses its appreciation for the positive outcome of this process and for QQI's ongoing support. We look forward to continuing our constructive engagement as we address the identified condition(s) and recommendations, which will ensure full alignment with the Higher Education Code and TrustEd Ireland quality standards, reinforcing DkIT's commitment to quality, integrity, and excellence in international education.

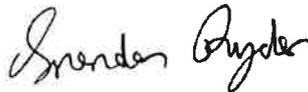## Institute Response Approved By:

Signed: *Sheila Flanagan*

Dr Sheila Flanagan,
Vice-President for Academic Affairs
and Registrar, DkIT.

Date: 11th November 2025.

Signed: *Brendan Ryder*

Dr Brendan Ryder,
Head of Academic
Planning and Quality Assurance, DkIT.

Date: 11th November 2025.