



Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland



# Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report: South East Technological University



## 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 South East Technological University's IEM Application Statement, which was submitted to QQI as part of the provider's application for authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. The 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 Kingdom
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 select
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.

## Summary

Seventeen of the 18 criteria here are applicable to South-East Technological University (SETU) and they are compliant across all criteria.

SETU provides information to international learners about its programmes, facilities and the range of supports and services it offers via a range of communication methods, including: the website (primary source of information), printed materials (e.g. SETU Global Quick Guide), email, phone, virtual meetings, chatbots and SETU's network of agents. Clear, accurate, transparent and easily accessible information is provided on programme aims, pathways to employment and further study, professional accreditation status, the award and its place within the NQF and study commencement dates. Information about placement requirements and restrictions could be enhanced through the provision of further information on mandatory visa, medical, police or other requirements or restrictions.

### Recommendation 1

**5.1.1 (d):** The panel recommends that SETU considers expanding the information provided to prospective international learners on requirements related to practice placements to ensure they are fully informed of any visa, medical, police or other requirements and restrictions.

SETU has put in place a number of mechanisms to provide assurance that information provision is clear and accessible, meets the needs of prospective international learners and is compliant with the TrustEd Ireland Code of Practice. For example, the university participates in the International Student Barometer (ISB), has embedded a compliance check into its annual programme information review cycle, and monitors web user behaviour and direct user enquiries to support continuous improvement. SETU also receives feedback on its website from recruitment representatives and international partners.

### Commendation 1

**5.1.1 (b):** The panel commends SETU for embedding a check on compliance with the HE Code into its annual programme information review cycle. This will continue to prioritise clarity, accessibility and compliance with the HE Code.

The ISB enables SETU to benchmark its engagement and support for international students across the student lifecycle (from pre-arrival through to arrival, living, learning, support and career planning) against Irish and global providers. In 2024, SETU's international student response rate (41%) was significantly higher than Irish and global benchmarks (25% and 21% respectively), providing a sound evidence base for improvements. SETU has embedded the ISB findings into its Global Engagement Strategic Plan 2024- 2028 and its overarching institutional strategy, Connecting for Impact, 2023-2028. The ISB complements other mechanisms such as focus groups and student participation on university committees and working groups, and enables feedback from a broader range of students. Noting however that over 90% of international students at SETU are TNE students, it is important to introduce mechanisms to capture similar information and data about the TNE student experience.

## **Commendation 2**

**5.1.1 (a):** The panel commends SETU's establishment of a robust feedback mechanisms to gather input from international learners on the clarity and usefulness of the information provided and use of this feedback to make continuous improvements.

## **Recommendation 2**

**5.1.1 (a):** The panel recommends that SETU considers putting in place mechanisms to gather feedback from TNE students and benchmark these with the experiences of international onshore students.

SETU conducted a targeted review of programme pages in Q1 2025 to ensure compliance with the TrustEd Ireland Code of Practice, particularly in relation to the clarity of programme content and the visibility of additional costs and charges. Actions arising from the review were implemented and the review has now been embedded into SETU's Annual Programme Information Review Cycle, where information on programmes and costs is cross-checked with academic departments before being added or updated on the CRM and application system. The review is overseen by the Global Office and Academic Affairs.

SETU receives feedback and assurance on the adequacy, clarity and accessibility of its website via monitoring of web user behaviour using analytics tools and direct user queries. The university has been recognised at the annual Spider awards for best in universal design. Its website design prioritises accessibility, useability and inclusivity. To support QA of information delivered in Mandarin the university seeks feedback from in- country representatives, engages professional translation services where

required and gathers informal feedback. SETU is exploring the development of interactive digital brochures to ensure that digital content is professionally translated and localised, easily adaptable for various markets and consistently updated across all markets.

### Commendation 3

**5.1.1 (f):** The panel commends SETU's multilayered approach to quality assuring its website for international learners, including for TNE students who receive information in Mandarin.

SETU delivers a comprehensive program of training to its agents each year to ensure they are appropriately informed about admissions procedures, programme developments and student support services. SETU delivers both global and individual training as required, with monthly and quarterly sessions. Sessions typically cover the application process, CRM portal usage, document uploads, scholarship and funding updates, visa guidance, new programme introductions, offer acceptance and payment procedures, and pre-departure briefings. Most sessions conclude with a Q&A or case study discussion to address specific agent queries and ensure clarity.

### Commendation 4

**5.1.2 (g):** The panel commends SETU's comprehensive approach to agent training.

## 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

Seven of the seven criteria here are applicable to SETU and they are compliant across all criteria.

SETU clearly specifies entry requirements and English language proficiency requirements on programme pages and the SETU Global webpage. The Admissions Policy governs admission processes while the English language Policy establishes the minimum standards and benchmarks for assessing the English language proficiency of international applicants. To provide assurance that entry requirements support the successful participation of learners, the university monitors progression, retention and completion rates and trends across all programmes, reviews application and performance data, benchmarks English language scores against student outcomes, monitors uptake and effectiveness of English language and academic skills supports, and, at Faculty Boards and Academic Council, regularly reviews entry criteria to ensure alignment with student success data.

When assessing the qualifications of prospective international learners SETU adheres to the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles. It uses the European Higher Education Area qualifications table and the European Qualifications Framework to identify qualifications that can be automatically considered for general access to the next level of education and ensure fairness and consistency. The process is clearly set out on the website under the Recognition of Prior Learning section along with relevant forms.

### Recommendation 3

**5.2 (c):** The panel recommends that SETU considers seeking advice from recognised credential evaluators such as ENIC-NARICs on a regular basis as part of their qualification recognition processes. This should be implemented within a year of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

Where a decision has been made to withhold recognition of an applicant's qualifications they are

informed in a timely manner. SETU has put in place a centralised application management system that tracks the status and timeliness of each application, and conducts biweekly internal reviews to monitor and ensure timely processing of applications.

While SETU provides applicants who have been refused admission with timely notification, the sample refusal letter provided to the panel does not provide information or links to information to support international applicants to make an appeal. SETU should provide information (or links to information) setting out how the applicant may contest the decision, including: the basis on which applicants can appeal, timeframes, application forms (if relevant), sources of advice and support, any legal or regulatory texts and possible measures the applicant may take to obtain recognition at a later stage.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**5.2 (f):** The panel recommends that SETU considers providing detailed information to support international applicants who wish to appeal the refusal to recognise a qualification for admission. This information should be easily accessible, and set out possible options, 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 SETU, and they are compliant across all criteria.

SETU's provision of information on study costs, including subsistence and accommodation is generally clear, accurate, transparent, relevant and current. The university has mechanisms in place, including the ISB, to regularly check that information continues to meet the needs of learners and support their decision-making, and to assure itself of the validity and transparency of the 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 for enhancement and continuous improvement.

SETU fees for international students are published on the website and in the Global Quick Guide. 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) as required by the criterion. Full disclosure of both annual and total indicative costs for the full degree in all communications to applicants would provide clarity to prospective and current students and facilitate forward financial planning. The panel notes that prospective students must navigate multiple pages to find non-EU fee information; SETU may wish to facilitate easy access to fee information for prospective students by providing that information directly on programme pages or via a link from them.

### Recommendation 5

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

### Recommendation 6

**5.3.1 (a):** The panel recommends that SETU considers clearly presenting fee information or providing a link to it on each individual course page to ensure transparency and ease of access. SETU programmes may have additional material costs such as software licenses or health and safety equipment. While these requirements are usually communicated by academic departments at the start of the programme or during orientation, SETU is encouraged to increase financial transparency and accessibility for prospective students by including these costs on the relevant programme pages. The panel acknowledges that full accuracy could be potentially challenging,

but recommends that SETU endeavour to provide full transparency.

**Recommendation 7**

**5.3.2 (a):** The panel recommends that SETU considers including on its programme pages clear, written information on indicative, additional costs associated with studying on the programme such as textbooks, electronic resources, software licenses, computer requirements and protective equipment.

SETU has a range of financial supports and scholarships for international students which it advertises on the SETU Global webpage, at orientation sessions and via SETU Global staff. It also has a draft emergency hardship fund. Once this fund is finalised and operational, it is suggested that the university make international students aware that this fund is available and detail how it can be accessed. This will support international students in need.

**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

Fifteen of the 15 criteria here are applicable to SETU, and they are compliant across all criteria.

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

SETU provides a general orientation for all students that includes both online and on-campus sessions and a dedicated orientation programme for international students that covers services, supports, facilities, immigration requirements and intercultural awareness. International students can also access peer mentor/buddy programmes to help them settle in. This initial induction is complemented by a range of other initiatives, including Uni-Life platform and Start SETU that aim to support student belonging, engagement and experience. Students receive a programme-specific induction from their department and are introduced to academic supports and services during their general orientation.

### Commendation 5

**5.4.1 (c):** The panel commends SETU's comprehensive approach to induction and to assuring its effectiveness for international students.

Students who join at other times during the year, such as advanced entry students who tend to

come from university partnerships or postgraduate research students, are provided with an academic induction and have ongoing access to advice on all relevant academic policies and procedures through academic advising services. However, they do not receive a comprehensive induction to the full range of services like their counterparts who commence at the beginning of the academic year.

While acknowledging that the full orientation experience may not be feasible due to lower student numbers, SETU 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.

### **Recommendation 8**

**5.4.1 (d):** The panel recommends that SETU considers putting in place measures to ensure that international learners who join at other times in the year receive a comprehensive induction to the full range of available services, beyond simply providing an academic induction and academic services and support.

The ISB provides SETU with assurance that its orientation program meets students' needs and identifies areas where SETU can improve. The ISB 2024 results showed that 90% of international students who took the survey were satisfied with information provided on accommodation, counselling, the health centre, and student advisory services, and the majority were satisfied with their introduction to study and campus life.

SETU gathers feedback from international students on the delivery of services and support via the ISB, focus groups, and student complaints, and will gain further feedback via SETU 100, a group of internationally diverse students reflecting the learner population of the University who will act as co-creators of SETU policy, curriculum, quality and research, thus helping to drive equality, diversity and inclusivity. This is a valuable initiative for which SETU is to be commended. Considering that 50% of international students are TNE students, SETU should ensure TNE students are represented in SETU 100.

### **Commendation 6**

**5.4.1 (h):** The panel commends SETU's commitment and proactive approach to gathering the diversity of students' views through the establishment of the 'SETU 100', enabling students to act as co-creators of policy and teaching and learning practices.

SETU approved a Race Equality action Plan to be phased in over the next 4 years that will involve mandatory anti-racism and intercultural awareness training for all staff. In 2024 staff had access to voluntary intercultural training via the yellow flag programme and provided feedback on it to support improvements.

## 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

- (iii) the quality assurance, credit and/or awarding arrangements for these programmes,
- (iv) 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

Three of the four criteria here are applicable to SETU, and they are compliant across all criteria.

SETU has an English Language Policy, endorsed by their Academic Council, that sets out the approach and process for the assessment of English language proficiency entry requirements, roles and responsibilities and measures of effectiveness. The latter include monitoring of the performance, progression and retention rates of students as a proxy for academic success. External reviews will be used as benchmarks to inform ongoing review of the policy.

The current international foundation year programme (NQF level 6) is being phased out and will no

longer be offered from the 2025-26 academic year. It is therefore not referenced in the English Language Policy as required under 5.5 (b).

### 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

Three of the eight criteria here are applicable to SETU, and they are compliant across all criteria.

SETU's collaborative programmes are developed, approved and delivered under SETU's academic quality assurance policies, but with the addition of due diligence processes and associated risk mitigation during the validation process. They are subject to equivalent quality processes, including programme boards, internal and external examiners, student feedback and annual monitoring and review. There is a multi-annual cyclical review of both the programme

provision and the collaboration.

The Joint Educational Institutes (JEI's) and Joint Educational Partnerships (JEPs) in China are joint ventures with Chinese universities that include delivery by SETU lecturers in China and blended learning. This is coupled with direct links to faculty in Ireland for module and programme management. The JEI's have joint management committees with senior university representation.

SETU provides staff training and ongoing monitoring and review to provide assurance that the principles and criteria of the HE Code are applied in an equivalent manner in its offshore operations. SETU has provided a statement outlining its support of QQI in facilitating recognition of awards made in the state outside the state.

## Summary of assessment outcomes

**This section provides for the Assessment Panel findings and outcomes by principle and criterion**

### **Overview of the provider's international profile and activities**

SETU was established in 2022 under the Technological Universities Act 2018 from a merger between Waterford Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology Carlow. It has almost 18,000 students, over 1600 staff, and delivers across 9 campuses. Since its establishment it has put in place new governance and management structures for the university as a whole, and to support its international provision. This includes a Governing Body, Academic Council and Executive Management Team, five vice presidents (Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning; Student Experience; Finance; Global Partnerships; and Governance). The VP Global Partnerships leads SETU's Global Office which is responsible for global engagement and internationalisation and works closely with Faculty and other PMSS functional areas. The Global Office comprises 17 staff across non-EU applicants and students, Erasmus+ mobility and business development.

SETU has 1,199 international learners, comprising 10.3% of its student population. Of these, 50% are TNE learners, with almost all from China, 7.8% are non-EU students, with the primary source markets being India, China, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Ukraine, and 2.6% are from the EU, with the Czech Republic and Spain representing key source markets. SETU has almost 350 partnerships with universities across Europe and the globe, including three JEIs and JEPs in China where it delivers nine undergraduate degrees. Two of these collaborations are well-established, having commenced in 2006 and 2004. The first intake via the JEI commenced in September 2022, shortly after approval. The JEP commenced in 2019 with a new partner.

SETU's international delivery is supported by an ambitious 5-year strategic plan for global engagement called *Global Minds, Global and Local Impact*, that sits underneath its institutional strategy, *Connecting for Impact*. Its global engagement plan is supported by objectives, actions and targets, including a significant increase in TNE and an 8% increase in non-EU students.

Since its establishment in 2022, SETU has worked quickly to establish centralised governance oversight and management, and a dedicated international student team. The quality of its current provision is borne out in the ISB survey where it ranks above the Irish and Global benchmark across a range of areas. It has a range of mechanisms including online and onsite means to ensure international student engagement. Student partnerships are commended, including the Global Ambassador Program and the SETU 100 initiative. Given its ambitions, in particular its targets for TNE and non-EU students, SETU should continue to mature its processes to ensure its compliance with the HE Code is systematic, data-led and evidence-based, in particular by fully embedding regular and systematic monitoring, review, checking and auditing of the effectiveness of its services and the clarity, accuracy, transparency and accessibility of its information provision. Considering that the TNE student population comprises the vast majority of international students at SETU, it will also be important to find comparable mechanisms to the ISB to track their satisfaction and benchmark these with that of international students studying onshore.

#### **Recommended condition(s) for authorisation:**

N/A

#### **Commendations:**

##### **Commendation 1**

**5.1.1 (b):** The panel commends SETU for embedding a check on compliance with the HE Code into its annual programme information review cycle. This will continue to prioritise clarity, accessibility and compliance with the HE Code.

##### **Commendation 2**

**5.1.1 (a):** The panel commends SETU's establishment of robust feedback mechanisms to gather input from international learners on the clarity and usefulness of the information provided, and use of this feedback to make continuous improvements.

##### **Commendation 3**

**5.1.1 (f):** The panel commends SETU's multilayered approach to quality assuring its website for international learners, including for TNE students who receive information in Mandarin.

**Commendation 4**

**5.1.2 (g):** The panel commends SETU's comprehensive approach to agent training.

**Commendation 5**

**5.4.1 (c):** The panel commends SETU's comprehensive approach to induction and to assuring its effectiveness for international students.

**Commendation 6**

**5.4.1 (h):** The panel commends SETU's commitment and proactive approach to gathering the diversity of students' views through the establishment of the 'SETU 100', enabling students to act as co-creators of policy and teaching and learning practices.

**Recommendations:****Recommendation 1**

**5.1.1 (d):** The panel recommends that SETU considers expanding the information provided to prospective international learners on requirements related to practice placements to ensure they are fully informed of any visa, medical, police or other requirements and restrictions.

**Recommendation 2**

**5.1.1(a):** The panel recommends that SETU considers putting in place mechanisms to gather feedback from TNE students and benchmark these with the experiences of international onshore students.

**Recommendation 3**

**5.2 (c):** The panel recommends that SETU considers seeking advice from recognised credential evaluators such as ENIC-NARICs on a regular basis as part of their qualification recognition processes. This should be implemented within a year of receiving authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark.

**Recommendation 4**

**5.2 (f):** The panel recommends that SETU considers providing detailed information to support international applicants who wish to appeal the refusal to recognise a qualification for admission. This information should be easily accessible, and set out information on possible options, advice and support.

**Recommendation 5**

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

**Recommendation 6**

**5.3.1 (a):** The panel recommends that SETU considers clearly presenting fee information or providing a link to it on each individual course page to ensure transparency and ease of access.

**Recommendation 7**

**5.3.2 (a):** The panel recommends that SETU considers including on its programme pages clear, written information on indicative, additional costs associated with studying on the programme such as textbooks, electronic resources, software licenses, computer requirements and protective equipment.

**Recommendation 8**

**5.4.1 (d):** The panel recommends that SETU considers putting in place measures to ensure that international learners who join at other times in the year receive a comprehensive induction to the full range of available services, beyond simply providing an academic induction and academic services and support.

### 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: 03.10.2025

Signed:



A. Hopbach

10 November 2025

Dr Achim Hopbach,  
Higher Education Consultant.

Dear Dr Hopbach,

### **SETU Response to TrustEd Ireland Assessment Report – HE Pathway**

South East Technological University (SETU) warmly welcomes the outcome of the TrustEd Ireland (HE Pathway) assessment and the opportunity to formally respond to the panel's findings.

We wish to sincerely thank QQI and the Assessment Panel for their thorough, constructive and collegial engagement throughout the process. As a university participating in the first submission window, we wish to acknowledge the exceptional support provided throughout, in particular the weekly presentations and Q&A sessions.

The TrustEd Ireland initiative represents a significant asset to the Irish higher education sector, and SETU is proud to be part of this important quality assurance and enhancement framework.

We are delighted with the outcome of the assessment and the panel's recommendation that SETU be authorised to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. Achieving full compliance across all 56 applicable criteria is a testament to the commitment and professionalism of our staff and the strength of our institutional systems, policies and practices. We particularly welcome the panel's commendations, which affirm our strategic and operational focus on international learner experience, quality assurance, and continuous improvement.

SETU acknowledges the eight recommendations outlined in the report and views them as valuable guidance for further enhancement. We are reassured that many of these areas are already being progressed or are planned for implementation as part of our strategic development. Specifically:

- **Practice Placement Information (Rec. 1):** We are reviewing programme pages and we will review expanding information on visa, medical and police requirements related to placements, with input from academic departments and international partners as required.
- **TNE Student Feedback (Rec. 2):** Mechanisms to capture TNE student experience are being scoped, including the potential of a TNE SETU 100 equivalent and adaptation of ISB-style tools.
- **Credential Evaluation (Rec. 3):** SETU recognises the importance of maintaining robust and informed qualification recognition processes. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement in this area, staff from the Global Office and Admissions are scheduled to attend the upcoming UK ENIC Conference in London in December 2025. This engagement will support our efforts to benchmark practices, stay abreast of international developments, and



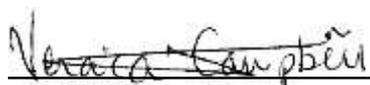
strengthen our institutional approach to credential evaluation. We note that SETU has previously participated in ENIC events in Dublin and Belfast, and we are pleased to renew this engagement.

- **Appeals Information (Rec. 4):** Our admissions communications are being updated to include clear guidance for applicants who have been refused admission should they wish to appeal the decision and provide additional supporting documentation. We will add reference to any relevant policies and supports.
- **Fee Transparency (Rec. 5 & 6):** We are exploring the best solution for our programme pages to link to our indicative programme costs page and ensure direct links to fee information for each programme.
- **Additional Costs (Rec. 7):** Academic departments are being asked to identify and publish indicative additional costs on programme pages. The process and procedures for the emergency hardship fund as outlined in the submission is undergoing final internal consultation. Once finalised and operational it will be advertised.
- **Induction for Off-Cycle Entrants (Rec. 8):** We will investigate whether a tailored online induction module could be developed to ensure parity of experience for students joining outside the main intake periods, with some additional activities organised at key periods in the year (e.g. January and May).

SETU remains committed to the principles of transparency, accessibility, and learner-centred provision that underpin the TrustEd Ireland framework. We will continue to embed these principles across our operations and ensure that our international learners - both onshore and offshore - receive high-quality, supportive and inclusive educational experiences.

Once again, we thank QQI and the Assessment Panel for their engagement and support. We look forward to formally adopting the TrustEd Ireland mark and contributing to the continued enhancement of Ireland's reputation as a destination for international education.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Veronica Campbell / An tOllamh Veronica Campbell**  
**President / Uachtarán**

