Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report:

University College Dublin

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 University College Dublin's (UCD) 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 assessment was conducted by the following Assessment Panel:

Name	Role	Affiliation
Prof Joanne Wright	Chairperson	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education & Students), University of Sydney, Australia
Fiona Crozier	Report Writer/Secretary	International Higher Education Consultant, United Kingdom
Fernando Galán	International Education Expert	University of Granada, Spain
Maria Malik	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 concurs with UCD's assessment that it fully complies with an applicable 17 out of the 18 criteria in Principle 1: Marketing and Recruitment.

UCD Global is of significant importance to international learners and their experience before and during their time at UCD as it is the means through which the University coordinates all communications and agent relations. UCD Marketing and Communications oversees all aspects of UCD Global communications in whatever format they are presented. Communication is informed by the 'UCD Global Guidance on Clear Communication with International Students' document which applies to all staff involved in student communication who are provided with training to ensure that the guidelines function well.

Through UCD Global and other means, the University demonstrates a comprehensive approach to marketing and recruitment. The institution maintains clear, accurate, and regularly updated information for prospective international students across various platforms, including course catalogues, prospectuses, and programme websites. The panel noted that all programmes offering placements publish relevant information across multiple platforms, ensuring transparency for prospective and current students and that the University had conducted an internal review to ensure that this was the case. The panel noted a link in the UCD International Welcome Booklet to the 'UCD Jargon Busters' which offers clear English translations of commonly used jargon. (5.1.1 (a), (b) & (d)).

International student feedback is sought through the usual local and national surveys and, more specifically, through the International Student Barometer. Student feedback on their pre- and post-

arrival experience informs the updating of marketing information and the information provided to future students (5.1.1 (a)).

Students are active participants in recruitment activities through the Student Ambassador programme and promote UCD through campus tours, supporting recruitment fairs amongst other activities.

Agents have access to a UCD Agent Portal which provides all the up-to-date information that they need. The structured access for agents, combined with internal monitoring tools, is a commendable example of digital infrastructure supporting international learner recruitment. Specific training is provided on matters such as admissions requirements, Irish visa regulations, etc. Their performance is reviewed 3 months prior to the end of contract. Student feedback is also sought and any problems raised are followed up with the agent in question (5.1.2 (c) - (h)).

Commendation 1
5.1.1 (a) and (b): The panel commends the effort made to provide clear translations of commonly used jargon.

Commendation 2
5.1.1 (d): The panel commends the consistent promotion of placement information across multiple platforms for all relevant programmes, ensuring transparency for prospective and current students.

Commendation 3
5.1.2 (g): The secure and user-friendly Agent Portal and CRM systems, as well as the structured access for agents, combined with internal monitoring tools, is a commendable example of digital infrastructure supporting international learner recruitment.

Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition: **Principle: 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 concurs with UCD's assessment that it fully complies with all 7 criteria in principle 5.2: Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition.

Entry and English Language proficiency requirements are clearly communicated (5.2 (a) & (b)). Admissions processes are transparent, timely, and effectively supported by systems such as UCD's CRM. Responses to applicants are timely, with decisions, in general, issued within 2–3 weeks of receipt. Reasons for any delay beyond this were provided to the panel. The panel accepts that such delays may be beyond the control of a provider.

However, the panel recommends that the University could avoid any difficulties that might arise from such delays by issuing public disclaimers or FAQ updates clarifying that response times may exceed two weeks during peak intake periods. (5.2 (e)).

UCD applies national and international standards (e.g., ENIC-NARIC, QQI) for recognition of qualifications (5.2 (d)) and the panel saw evidence that unsuccessful applicants are given tailored information on how to obtain future recognition or meet requirements, including referral to support services and appeal mechanisms (5.2 (f)).

Recommendation 1

5.2 (e): That UCD consider issuing public disclaimers or FAQ updates clarifying that response times for applications may exceed two weeks during peak intake periods. This consideration and any ensuing action should be completed within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

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

The panel concurs with UCD's assessment that it is fully compliant with all 11 criteria in Principle 5.3: Fees, Refunds and Subsistence.

Information regarding tuition fees, refund policies, and living costs is publicly available and clearly communicated, with the provision of a dedicated hub for information about fees. Fee information for non-EU learners by year is provided for prospective students ensuring that students are clear on the cost of their programme for the duration of their study. EU course fees for undergraduate students are published annually for each programme. The panel noted that learners are not required to make substantial financial commitments until admission is confirmed. (5.3.1 and 5.3.2). Procedures regarding refunds are published and information is provided on financial supports for international learners. This includes a range of scholarships such as the Global Excellence

Scholarships, Country-Specific Scholarships and Subject-Specific Scholarships, a Student Support Fund which is a means-tested fund intended to help students who are experiencing financial challenges in college as a result of ongoing low income. These funds cannot be used to pay for registration or tuition fees and are available to EU students only, and a Student Emergency Fund for students who face unexpected financial challenges. (5.3.1 (f) & (g)).

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 concurs with UCD's assessment that it fully complies with all 15 of the criteria in Principle 5.4: Supports and Services for International Learners.

UCD provides robust academic and pastoral supports to international students. Various types of orientation sessions are available: onsite orientation for all students, additional onsite orientation for international students and an online orientation module. Access to academic advisers, visa and housing support, financial hardship information and ongoing communication mechanisms are in place. (5.4.1 (a) – (g)). There is also support for Maths and Writing through the Maths Support Centre and the UCD Writing Centre. Follow-up communication regarding support and services is provided at various points in the year when key information becomes relevant. (5.4.2 (b) & (c))

5.4.1 (e): The panel noted UCD's Peer Mentoring Scheme through which each new incoming undergraduate is provided with a peer mentor through a pairing process that matches academic and social experiences. This provides new students with a structured support network and facilitates their engagement with and integration into the UCD community.

Services are embedded in institutional quality processes governed by the UCD QA/QE Policy and QA Framework and reviewed cyclically. A Student Experience Group reports to the University Management Team on supports available to all students (5.4.1 (h) & (i)).

Commendation 4
5.4.1 (e): The panel commends the effective Peer Mentoring Scheme for new undergraduate students.

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 concurs with UCD's assessment of full compliance with the 3 applicable criteria out of 4 in Principle 5.5: English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes.

5.5 (a): UCD has a clear and accessible English Language Policy, which sets out minimum entry requirements and recognised tests.

5.5 (b) & (c): The English Language Policy also provides a structured framework for the quality assurance and academic recognition of the undergraduate International Foundation Year (IFY) programme which is currently delivered in collaboration with the Dublin International Study Centre and follows the same QA procedures as other UCD programmes to ensure consistency and due

diligence. Successful completion of the NFQ level 5 programme, with the requisite grades, guarantees learners' progression to UCD's undergraduate degrees. At postgraduate level, the University offers a pre- master's programme with an award at level 7 on the NFQ, and successful completion, with the requisite grades, guarantees learners' progression to UCD's postgraduate programmes. IFY programmes are fully aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. However, the panel noted that the University's ELPS does not state the type of award and its NFQ level (5.5 (b)) of its IFY undergraduate programme.

Recommendation 2

5.5 (b): The panel recommends that the University include further information in the English Language Policy Statement on the international foundation programme offered by the external provider, e.g., type of award and NFQ level, within 12 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation (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

The panel concurs with UCD's assessment of full compliance with all 8 of the criteria in Principle 5.6: International Learners Outside the State.

5.6.1 (a)-(c): UCD's transnational education provision is extensive and embedded within its institutional QA framework. Provision includes partnerships in China (BDIC), Singapore (Kaplan) and a joint venture with the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland (RCSI): the RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus (RUMC). TNE provision must adhere to UCD Academic Regulations in all matters in order to ensure consistency and equivalence and that all partnerships undergo internal quality reviews, with documented Quality Improvement Plans. Quality assurance procedures apply equally across all sites, whether at home or overseas, ensuring equivalence of learner experience.

5.6.1 (d) Two of UCD's linked providers, the Institute of Banking (IoB) and the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), have a small number of international learners and small TNE provision. They are required to adhere to UCD's Academic Regulations and policies, and there is a Linked Providers Handbook which sets out the quality assurance processes relating to their provision.

5.6.1 (a)-(c):Online provision for international learners is small. However, UCD makes no distinction between online and onsite qualifications in terms of application of Academic Regulations and there is no difference in the quality assurance procedures applied.

5.6.2 (d): As for 5.6.1 (d) above, the IoB and NCAD have small numbers of international online learners. As the designated awarding body, UCD has robust processes in place to assure the quality and standards of these awards.

Commendation 5
5.6.1 (a): The panel commends UCD for its culture of quality that ensures parity of standards and student experience across a large and diverse portfolio of TNE (5.6.1 (a)).

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

The facts presented in UCD's IEMAS application demonstrate the scale of the University's internationalisation endeavours:

- Its 38K student cohort represents 150 countries
- 34% of the student population is categorised as international
- 5K students study overseas for UCD awards and there are 11K international students studying in Dublin
- There are 3 international colleges in China hosted at the campuses of Chinese partners.
- UCD jointly hosts a Malaysian campus for Medicine with the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI)
- A partnership with Kaplan offers undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) degree programmes in Singapore
- The University has Global Centres in Beijing, Delhi, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur and New York.
- UCD is a member of 8 global research and learning networks and has 560 partner institutions worldwide.

The University's vision is 'to be renowned as a dynamic, engaged university and a transforming force in Ireland, in the wider world and in the lives of our students.'

Global reach is one of the six cross-cutting themes in the new 2025-30 Strategic Plan, "Breaking Boundaries", and aims to increase the diversity of the learner community and the range of student opportunities to contribute to Ireland's future success at national, European and global level.

The UMT Global Engagement Group provides high level oversight of international activities and advises on matters of international interest. The Vice President for Global Engagement line manages UCD Global (which supports the delivery of the international strategies and provides leadership for partnerships, international recruitment, mobility and the international elements of student support as well as the Global Centres), the Centre for English and Global Languages, the Irish Institute for Chinese Studies and the UCD Confucius Institute.

UCD's Quality Framework supports its international endeavours through international benchmarking and enhancement of all its activities, including TNE. Students are supported in an inclusive environment. Learner supports are available to all students, with additional support for international learners such as, for example, from UCD Registry for application and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to UCD Global, including for information on English Language requirements, programme information, orientation and opportunities for students to build connections. UCD

Global also provides additional support with regard to orientation.

The panel appreciated the detailed and clear IEMAS application and the wealth of supporting evidence that accompanied it. The evidence demonstrates comprehensive and consistent compliance with all applicable criteria under the HE Code of Practice. The University's processes for ensuring accurate and timely information for international learners, student support (including the Peer Mentoring Scheme), and transnational education reflect sector-leading practices.

The panel therefore recommends that UCD be authorised to use the TrustEd Ireland Mark without conditions.

Recommended condition(s) for authorisation

N/A

Commendations

Commendation 1
5.1.1 (a) and (b): The panel commends the efforts made to provide clear translations of commonly used jargon.

Commendation 2
5.1.1 (d): The panel commends the consistent promotion of placement information across multiple platforms for all relevant programmes, ensuring transparency for prospective and current students.

Commendation 3
5.1.2 (g): The panel commends the secure and user-friendly Agent Portal and CRM systems, as well as the structured access for agents, combined with internal monitoring tools, is a commendable example of digital infrastructure supporting international learner recruitment.

Commendation 4
5.4.1 (e): The panel commends the effective Peer Mentoring Scheme for new undergraduate students.

Commendation 5
5.6.1 (a): The panel commends the culture of quality that ensures parity of standards and student experience across a large and diverse portfolio of TNE.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

5.2 (e): The panel recommends that UCD consider issuing public disclaimers or FAQ updates clarifying that response times for applications may exceed two weeks during peak intake periods. This consideration and any ensuing action should be completed within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Recommendation 2

5.5 (b): The panel recommends that the University include further information in the English Language Policy Statement on the international foundation programme offered by the external provider, e.g. type of award and NFQ level, within 12 weeks of the TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

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: Joanne Wright

 Date: 5 October 2025

Signed:
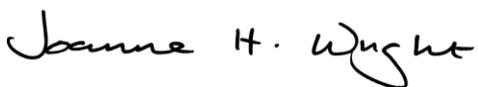
UCD Response to the Assessment Panel for the International Education Mark

University College Dublin welcomes the opportunity to respond to the QQI IEM HE Pathway Assessment Panel report. As Ireland's global University, UCD acknowledges the Panel's evaluation of UCD's compliance with the criteria in the QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners, their assessment that the University is fully compliant with all applicable criteria, and their recommendation that UCD is authorised to use the TrustEd Ireland Mark without conditions.

We are pleased that the Panel has confirmed that UCD has a robust and integrated quality assurance framework and academic governance that supports the international learners on their academic journey within an inclusive student environment. We appreciate the Panel's feedback commending the clarity and detail of the University's IEMAS application and supporting documentation, the depth and scope of our processes for providing up-to-date and timely information for international learners, our comprehensive student supports, in particular, the Peer Mentoring Scheme, and the University's leadership role in delivering transnational education. The application process has provided us with the opportunity to pause and reflect on how we engage with and integrate international learners into the UCD student body ensuring best practice. This ambition was echoed by the Panel in their commendation on our quality culture that ensures parity of standards and consistency of the student experience across a large and diverse portfolio of TNE. (5.6.1a)

Development of our IEMAS application has provided clear evidence of the collaborative, transparent and university-wide engagement of our Colleges, Schools and Professional Units to support our international learners which is articulated in UCD's Strategy to 2030. The consistent promotion of placement information across our programmes for prospective, incoming and current learners, as commended by the Panel, is evidence of this approach. Similarly, the Panel's commendation on our digital infrastructure supporting our recruitment of international learners through our secure and user-friendly Agent Portal, CRM systems, and our internal monitoring tools that includes training, performance review and student feedback is a further acknowledgement of our quality assurance and enhancement processes.

UCD will continue to support our international learners through our internal quality assurance framework and compliance with the QQI Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes and Training for International Learners. The University has addressed the Panel's two recommendations. FAQ updates to clarify application response times during peak intake periods are now published on the relevant University website pages, and the recommendation on amending the University English Language Policy to include the minimum type of award and NFQ level for the international foundation year programme has been completed and will shortly go for approval to the University's Programme Board (UPB) and Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC).

We would like to thank the members of the Development Directorate and International Education Division in QQI for their support and guidance throughout the process.

Professor Orla Feely
President

6 November 2025