



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland



Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report: Atlantic 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 Atlantic Technological University'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
Prof. Jeremy Bradshaw	Chairperson	International Higher Education Consultant, United Kingdom
Prof. Michelle Callanan	Report Writer/Secretary	Deputy Dean (QA & Enhancement), University College Birmingham, United Kingdom
Kate Fitzgibbon	International Education Expert	RMIT University, Australia
Damian Gornik	Learner	Munster 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 ATU that 17 of the 18 criteria are applicable for Principle 5.1: Marketing and Recruitment, confirming that criterion 5.1.2 (i) is not relevant in this context. The Panel also concurs with ATU's assessment that full compliance has been demonstrated across 16 applicable criteria and partial compliance with 5.1.2 (h). The Panel has noted two recommendations for ATU to strengthen its compliance with criteria 5.1.1 (b) (non-timebound) and fully comply with 5.1.2 (h) (timebound). The Panel reached this conclusion by examining the evidence submitted by ATU, as covered below.

The Panel confirmed that ATU demonstrates compliance with criterion 5.1.1 (a) by employing a multi-channel approach to understand the information needs of prospective learners. This includes market research, student feedback, and insights from national and international education bodies such as the Irish Council for International Students, the European Association for International Education, the Erasmus Student Network, and the Institute for International Education. ATU also collaborates with its International Student Ambassador Programme to co-create promotional content, including student stories and video testimonials, shared across digital platforms.

In relation to criterion 5.1.1 (b), the Panel confirms that ATU provides clear, accurate, and accessible information through its website, the International Applicant Portal, and the University's International Guide. These platforms offer comprehensive details on programme content, entry requirements, fees, scholarships, accommodation, and student support. Visa and immigration guidance is available via the International FAQs section; however, the Panel noted that its current

placement is not sufficiently prominent. The Panel recommends that ATU considers making this information more visible on the website to enhance accessibility for prospective international learners and strengthen ATU's compliance with criterion 5.1.1 (b) (non-timebound).

Programme-specific webpages reviewed by the Panel included detailed information such as award title, NFQ level, duration, mode of study, campus location, modules, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and professional accreditations. Programme Fact Sheets and the ATU Student Hub provide key dates. ATU complies with criteria 5.1.1 (c), (d), and (i) and Section 67 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended), ensuring students receive essential programme information and timely updates.

ATU's documentation reflects a collaborative approach between the Admissions Office, Marketing, School Liaison, and ATU Global, ensuring content accuracy and accessibility. The Panel reviewed programme webpages and ATU's *International Guide for Nigerian Students*, which highlighted the University's inclusive and global ethos. The guide included a well-paced, captioned video featuring a Nigerian student, supporting compliance with criteria 5.1.1 (b), (f), (g), and (h).

Regarding criterion 5.1.2 (a) and (b), tuition and fee information is clearly signposted, with additional cost details provided where available.

Accommodation costs are listed under Student Life. ATU acknowledges the challenge of estimating cost-of-living across campuses and plans to link to the independent *Switcher.ie Student Cost of Living Guide* by the end of 2025, which is already shared via email.

The Panel reviewed formal agreements with recruitment agents, aligned with the London Statement and including termination clauses. Due diligence includes reference checks, financial and legal verification, and statutory compliance. Agents are required to use pre-approved marketing materials and receive up-to-date information via online platforms. Training is delivered through webinars, in-person sessions, and briefings, supporting compliance with criteria 5.1.2 (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g).

While agent monitoring is in place, a draft framework is currently under development, with a policy expected by December 2025. The Panel recommends that this framework should be formally adopted and implemented through appropriate governance structures within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Overall, the Panel has concluded that 17 out of the 17 criteria are applicable to ATU for Principle 5.1 (with 5.1.2 (i) not applicable), and ATU is fully compliant across 17 criteria, with two

recommendations noted.

Recommendation 1

5.1.1 (b): The Panel recommends improving the visibility of visa and immigration guidance on ATU's website to better support prospective international learners (non-timebound).

Recommendation 2

5.1.2 (h): The Panel recommends that the framework for Agent Monitoring and Evaluation should be formally adopted and implemented through appropriate governance structures to ensure full compliance with criterion 5.1.2 (h) within 24 weeks from the date of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

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 ATU that all seven criteria are applicable for Principle 5.2: Admissions and

Qualifications' Recognition. The Panel also concurs with ATU's assessment that full compliance has been demonstrated across all seven applicable criteria, with 1 commendation [5.2 (c)] and 1 timebound recommendation [5.2 (e)] noted. The Panel reached this conclusion by examining the evidence submitted by ATU, as covered below.

The Panel confirms that ATU presents its entry requirements in a clear and accessible format. These requirements are explicitly stated on programme webpages and include minimum academic qualifications mapped to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), English language proficiency standards, and recognition of international qualifications through trusted networks such as NARIC Ireland, ECCTIS (UK), and other global recognition bodies. This approach ensures comparability with Irish qualifications and supports successful learner participation. Emphasis is placed on English language proficiency for applicants whose first language is not English, ensuring that all students are adequately prepared for academic engagement in an English-speaking environment. In addition, ATU's Certificate in Access for Higher Education (NFQ Level 6, 60 ECTS), delivered in partnership with IBAT Dublin, provides a dedicated entry route for mature learners, returners to education, and those from non-traditional backgrounds, preparing them for higher education. This programme is aligned with NFQ and is available full-time or in blended mode to support successful progression into higher education. These practices demonstrate compliance with criteria 5.2 (a), (b) and (d).

With reference to criterion 5.2 (c), the Panel confirms that ATU demonstrates a strong commitment to international best practices in the recognition of qualifications. This is evidenced by its active engagement with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and its use of the Spotlight Self-Assessment Tool, developed by ENIC-NARIC in collaboration with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), to critically evaluate and enhance recognition policies. The Panel commends this proactive approach and the production of a quality report, which reflects ATU's dedication to maintaining high standards in international admissions. Additionally, international applicants with prior qualifications may be eligible for advanced entry pathways, allowing them to enter later stages of study.

These pathways are subject to rigorous assessment of learning equivalence, ensuring academic integrity and appropriate placement.

The Panel confirms that ATU's admissions framework facilitates the recognition of qualifications that grant access to higher education in an applicant's home country. This is implemented through ATU's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and its alignment with NARIC and QQI guidance for benchmarking foreign qualifications against the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Where appropriate, ATU supports automatic recognition in accordance with the EU Council

Recommendation on Promoting Automatic Mutual Recognition (2018) [5.2 (d)]. In addition, ATU's documentation demonstrates transparency for applicants whose qualifications are not recognised for admission purposes, in line with 5.2 (f).

Finally, the Panel acknowledges that ATU complies with section 5.2 (e) by issuing timely written responses to international applicants who are refused admission. However, the Panel notes that ATU's documentation does not specify a maximum timeframe for issuing such responses. Therefore, the Panel recommends that ATU include a defined maximum response timeframe in its official documentation, to be implemented within 24 weeks of TrustEd authorisation, to strengthen its compliance with 5.2 (e).

The above clearly demonstrates ATU's compliance with all seven applicable criteria for Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition, with one commendation and one timebound recommendation noted below:

Commendation 1

5.2 (c): The Panel commends ATU's use of the Spotlight Self-Assessment Tool and the production of a quality report, which reflects the University's commitment to maintaining high standards in international admissions.

Recommendation 3

5.2 (e): The Panel recommends that ATU include a defined maximum response timeframe in its official documentation, to be implemented 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 agrees with ATU that all 11 criteria under Principle 5.3: Fees, Refunds, and Subsistence are applicable. It concurs with ATU's assessment of full compliance across 11 criteria. These judgements are based on a thorough review of the evidence submitted by ATU.

ATU demonstrates compliance with section 5.3.1 (a) by providing clear and accessible information on student fees across multiple platforms. Tuition fees are published on individual programme webpages, the central Fees and Funding page, and in the 2025 International Guide, which also includes links to programme content, entry requirements, and professional accreditations. The Fees Schedule document further outlines tuition fees, repeat examination charges, and administrative costs, such as those associated with examination reviews and appeals.

In accordance with section 5.3.1 (b), the Panel confirms that international applicants receive tailored fee information via the DreamApply portal, which also issues digital payment receipts. Receipts are provided for payments made through other approved platforms. Upon acceptance of an offer, students are issued a detailed invoice.

Aligned with section 5.3.1 (c) and (g), ATU's tuition fees are reviewed annually by the University's Fees Committee, which includes student representation, to ensure they remain competitive and reflective of the actual cost of programme delivery. Revenue from tuition is reinvested in accordance with ATU's strategic priorities. ATU offers a range of scholarships for non-EU students, with fee reductions based on academic performance, English language proficiency, and country of origin.

ATU's documentation provides clear information on additional programme- related costs, including

textbooks, electronic resources, computer requirements, and protective equipment. While most of this information is currently available, the University is undertaking a comprehensive review of all programmes to identify and address any gaps, with updates expected by the end of September 2025. For non-tuition expenses such as accommodation, living costs, and transportation, ATU refers students to external resources, including Switcher.ie's *Student Cost of Living Guide*. The Panel noted ATU's confirmation that this guide will be linked on relevant webpages as part of an upcoming website update, and that it is already shared with prospective students via email, in accordance with 5.3.1 (d), 5.3.2 (a) and (b).

The Panel reviewed ATU's *International Fee and Refund Policy*, accessible via the international webpage. This policy outlines tuition fees, payment deadlines, instalment options, refund eligibility, and application procedures. ATU demonstrates flexibility in payment arrangements and does not engage external debt collection agencies, preferring to work directly with students experiencing financial difficulties. The Panel also confirmed that receipts are issued to international applicants, in accordance with 5.3.1 (e) and (f).

Although ATU does not directly provide accommodation, the Panel noted that it refers students to the Student Union webpages that list third-party providers. Additionally, the University does not impose any supplementary or ad hoc charges on international students for services that are offered free of charge to domestic and EU students, thereby maintaining a fair and equitable approach to student support [5.3.2 (c) and (d)].

Based on the above, the Panel concludes that ATU complies fully with the 11 applicable criteria for Principle 5.3: Fees, Refunds, and Subsistence.

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 confirms that all 15 criteria under Principle 5.4: Supports and Services for International Learners are applicable to ATU and concurs with ATU's self-assessment of full compliance across 14 criteria. However, the Panel is not satisfied that ATU is compliant with criterion 5.4.1 (g), which pertains to the provision of a hardship fund, as no such fund is currently in place. Consequently, the Panel does not agree with ATU's self-assessment of full compliance with this criterion; instead, it rates this as non-compliant. Accordingly, a timebound condition has therefore been noted.

These judgements are based on a comprehensive review of the submitted evidence, as noted below.

With reference to section 5.4.1 (a), the Panel noted that ATU Global serves as the central contact point for international student enquiries, working collaboratively with Student Services, the Students' Union, and campus-based teams to deliver a coordinated support system. International Student Ambassadors play a key role in helping new students adapt to university life and settle in Ireland.

The Panel observed the range of pre-arrival support available, including digital student packs, regular email updates, a dedicated webpage, mandatory online workshops, and active social media engagement. Upon arrival, students participate in an in-person induction aligned with the *First Five Weeks* initiative, which offers structured activities to support integration. Cultural training, developed in partnership with the Irish Council for International Students, introduces Irish culture and provides practical guidance on residence permits, PPSNs, banking, and transport [5.4.1 (b)].

ATU's documentation confirms that all students, including advanced entry and those enrolled in regulated programmes, are required to attend induction sessions. These sessions provide essential information on academic expectations, university policies, visa responsibilities, and available support services. Induction materials are distributed via email and hosted on the ATU website and StudentHub, a SharePoint-based portal that offers access to course registration, virtual learning environments (VLEs), email, IT support, and library services. The ATU IT Hub complements this by guiding students on digital tools, software, cybersecurity, and printing services [5.4.1 (c), (d), and (e); 5.4.2 (a), (b), and (c)].

The Panel confirmed that academic integrity, plagiarism, and the responsible use of AI are key themes within induction. The Academic Integrity Hub provides training and resources on academic policies and assessment practices. Students also benefit from the *Student Digital Backpack*, a suite of self-paced courses covering civic engagement, digital skills, gender-based violence awareness, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Since September 2024, ATU has offered free online English language support, including weekly live lessons and optional one-to-one tutoring [5.4.1 (c), (e), and (f); 5.4.2 (a), (d), and (e)].

The Panel noted ATU's acknowledgement that a dedicated hardship fund for non-EU students is not yet in place. However, the University has committed to establishing such a fund within 24 weeks of receiving IEM designation. As a hardship fund is a requirement under section 5.4.1(g), the Panel concludes that ATU is currently non-compliant and places a condition on the University to establish the fund within one year of TrustEd authorisation.

The Panel also noted that ATU has established various mechanisms to gather feedback from international students and drive continuous enhancement. These include representation on

programme boards, formal feedback channels, and regular surveys conducted by ATU Global. Informal feedback is also collected through the International Student Ambassador network, contributing to ongoing improvements in the student experience [5.4.1 (h) and (i)].

Finally, the Panel reviewed ATU's support for staff development. The University's Staff Development Centre and Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) offer accredited qualifications, including a Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma, and MA in Teaching and Learning. Following a 2023 training needs analysis, ATU expanded its digital learning platforms and launched a Staff Training Hub. Staff receive training in inclusive teaching, cultural awareness, and diversity, with EDI principles embedded in professional development. In collaboration with Georgian College (Canada), ATU Global has introduced the IVEL CPD credential to support curriculum internationalisation through virtual exchange and blended mobility. All staff also have access to LinkedIn Learning, which offers thousands of expert-led courses across academic and professional domains [5.4.2 (f)].

The above clearly demonstrates ATU's compliance with 14 of the 15 applicable criteria for Principle 5.4: Supports and Services for International Learners, and non-compliant with 5.4.1 (g). Accordingly, the Panel places the following condition on ATU:

Condition 1

5.4.1 (g): ATU must establish a hardship fund within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

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 ATU that 3 of the 4 criteria are applicable under Principle 5.5: English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes. However, it does not agree that criterion 5.5 (d) applies to the provider. As ATU's Certificate in Access for Higher Education, considered equivalent to an International Foundation Year Programme, is aligned with NFQ Level 6, the Panel concludes that criterion 5.5 (d) is not applicable, and was assessed as applicable by ATU in error.

The Panel concurs with ATU's self-assessment of full compliance with two of the applicable criteria [5.5 (b) and (c)]. However, the Panel is not satisfied that ATU is compliant with criterion 5.5 (a), which requires the publication of an English Language Policy as a standalone document. Accordingly, the Panel does not agree with ATU's assessment of full compliance with this criterion and instead rates the provider as partially compliant with 5.5 (a). A timebound condition has been noted to address this gap.

The Panel reviewed ATU's *English Language Policy Statement for International Learners* (ELPSIL), which explicitly states that ATU does not have a standalone ELPS policy document. Although the ELPSIL states that English requirements are embedded within other admissions and policy documentation (such as the *Access, Transfer & Progression Policy* (ATP) and *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) documents), this is not compliant with criterion 5.5 (a). Accordingly, the Panel places a condition on ATU to ensure that its English Language Policy is published as a standalone document on ATU's website within 24 weeks of TrustEd authorisation.

In addition, the Panel noted that the ELPSIL stated that ATU does not directly offer pre-sessional or in-sessional English language courses to support international learners. ATU guides students to other providers offering pre-sessional English courses and states that they are exploring potential

partnerships with external providers to facilitate additional support. The Panel therefore recommends that ATU considers developing further focused in-sessional English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study (non-timebound) [5.5 (a)].

With reference to 5.5 (b) and (c), the Panel noted ATU's statement that, although it does not offer a standalone International Foundation Year Programme outside the NFQ, the University provides an equivalent pathway through its accredited Certificate in Access for Higher Education. Delivered in partnership with IBAT Dublin, this foundation-level programme comprises 60 ECTS credits at NFQ Level 6 and offers a recognised route into undergraduate study. The Panel confirmed from the documentation that ATU retains full responsibility for academic and quality assurance, including curriculum approval and validation. Accordingly, ATU demonstrates full compliance with these criteria.

Although ATU has stated that criterion 5.5 (d) is applicable and that it is fully compliant, the Panel has determined that this criterion does not apply. As the University does not offer International Foundation Year Programmes that fall outside the NFQ, the Panel concluded that its inclusion in the IEMAS rating was made in error.

Overall, the Panel has concluded that 3 out of the 4 criteria are applicable to ATU for Principle 5.5: English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes and they are fully compliant across 2 criteria and non-compliant with 5.5 (a), with 1 condition and 1 recommendation noted.

Condition 2

5.5 (a): The Panel places a condition on ATU to ensure that its English Language Policy is published as a standalone document on ATU's website within 24 weeks of TrustEd authorisation.

Recommendation 4

5.5 (a): The Panel therefore recommends that ATU considers developing further focused in-sessional English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study (non-timebound).

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 ATU that six of the eight criteria are applicable for Principle 5.6: International Learners Outside the State, confirming that criteria 5.6.1 (d) and 5.6.2 (d) are not applicable to the provider.

The Panel concurs with ATU's self-assessment of full compliance across all six applicable criteria, with one commendation noted below.

The Panel concluded that ATU's documentation demonstrates a strong governance commitment to the internationalisation of its curriculum, in alignment with QQI codes for the provision of education to international learners [5.6.1 (a), (b), and (c)]. The University's quality assurance framework is aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and incorporates the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Cross- border Education, supporting both remote and transnational education (TNE). All programmes, including collaborative and offshore, are subject to consistent quality standards and periodic reviews in accordance with QQI requirements. The Panel reviewed ATU's recent Annual Quality Review Report, which further reinforces the University's robust monitoring procedures, which safeguard learners and uphold academic standards across emerging multi-

provider and offshore collaborative programmes.

To demonstrate compliance with criteria 5.6.2 (a), (b), and (c), the Panel reviewed ATU's documentation and policies, noting a comprehensive and integrated approach to collaborative provision, learner support, and contingency planning. The *Collaborative Provision of Programmes Policy* governs the development and delivery of joint, double, and multiple awards, ensuring these arrangements meet ATU's academic standards and quality assurance requirements. ATU's *Access, Transfer and Progression Policy* outlines standard entry requirements, including English language competency, for all applicants and linked providers. Its admissions framework promotes transparency and fairness, with minimum academic standards aligned to the NFQ and benchmarked internationally.

In relation to criterion 5.6.2 (a), the Panel also reviewed ATU's *Student Complaints Policy*, which applies to all students, including recent graduates. TNE agreements clearly specify responsibilities for handling complaints in offshore settings. To strengthen oversight, the Panel recommends that ATU formally integrates offshore complaints procedures into its institutional policy framework (non-timebound).

Furthermore, students actively contribute to programme monitoring through the *Monitoring, Evaluation, and Enhancement of Programmes Policy*, ensuring the learner voice is embedded within quality assurance processes.

The Panel commends ATU for its robust contingency planning and risk assurance processes, which effectively address potential disruptions to programme delivery, including in offshore contexts. In the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as geopolitical or regulatory changes, the documentation reflects ATU and its partners' commitment to collaboratively developing and implementing appropriate contingency measures, in accordance with 5.6.2 (a).

Additionally, the Panel observed that all students, whether on-campus, online, or offshore, have access to learner support through platforms such as the StudentHub and IT Hub. ATU's approach includes orientation resources on academic integrity, subject-specific support, and digital services such as writing and exam guidance, assistive technologies, and access to the digital library [5.6.2 (b)].

The above clearly demonstrates ATU's compliance with the 6 applicable criteria for Principle 5.6: International Learners Outside the State, with the following commendation noted:

Commendation 2

5.6.2 (a): The Panel commends ATU for its robust contingency planning and risk assurance processes, which effectively address potential disruptions to programme delivery, including in offshore contexts.

Recommendation 55.6.2 (a): The Panel recommends that ATU formally integrates offshore complaints procedures into its institutional policy framework to strengthen its oversight (non-timebound).

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

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) is a multi-campus institution established in April 2022 through the merger of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, and St Angela's College, Sligo. As a newly formed university, ATU is currently undergoing a transitional phase in governance and management across its nine campuses, overseen by an interim University Planning Team (UPT).

ATU serves over 26,000 students and employs approximately 2,500 staff. Its academic portfolio includes more than 600 programmes spanning Higher Certificates to Doctoral degrees, with a strong emphasis on STEM disciplines. The University also offers over 400 flexible learning courses, many of which are fully online, supported by the Office of Flexible and Professional Development.

The University's international engagement is led by ATU Global, the dedicated international office responsible for student recruitment and partnership development across Africa, Asia, North America, and Europe. This work is supported by International Student Ambassadors and a network of agents. ATU is actively expanding its global partnerships, non-EU student recruitment, and mobility programmes. Staff and student mobility is currently facilitated through the Erasmus+ programme and ATU's membership in the European University Alliance.

ATU is affiliated with several international networks and organisations, including the European Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (EUASHE), the European University Association (EUA), the University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN), the European Association for International Education, Universities Ireland, and the World Technological University Network (WTUN).

ATU currently delivers a collaborative MSc in Leadership & Innovation in the Public Sector with

Ulster University, accredits three programmes at IBAT College Dublin, collaborates with five Chinese institutions offering progression to Level 7 and 8 awards, and jointly delivers a European Mundus programme with ten partner universities across Europe.

Academic quality for international students is governed by ATU's Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement (AQAE) framework. Collaborative and transnational programmes are managed under a dedicated policy that outlines governance, approval, and quality assurance processes.

ATU fully complies with 57 of the 59 applicable criteria across the six principles outlined in the Higher Education Code (5.1–5.6), as previously detailed, with two commendations noted. ATU is partially compliant with 5.5 (a), and non-compliant with 5.4.1 (g), due to the absence of a hardship fund. Accordingly, the Panel have issued two conditions and five recommendations for ATU, as noted below.

Although ATU has stated that 5.5 (d) is applicable and fully compliant, the Panel have determined that this is not applicable to ATU and was rated in error on IEMAS.

Given that this provider represents an amalgamation of multiple institutions since 2022, and teaches across several campuses, the Panel commends ATU's significant progress in establishing a robust overarching governance structure, which has enabled a coherent and consistent approach to the delivery of their provision [general commendation, outside the scope of the HE Code].

Recommended condition(s) for authorisation

Condition 1

5.4.1 (g): ATU must establish a hardship fund within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Condition 2

5.5 (a): ATU must ensure that its English Language Policy is published as a standalone document on its website within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Commendations

Commendation 1

5.2 (c): The Panel commends ATU's use of the Spotlight Self-Assessment Tool and the production of a quality report, which reflects the University's commitment to maintaining high standards in international admissions.

Commendation 2

5.6.2 (a): The Panel commends ATU for its robust contingency planning and risk assurance

processes, which effectively address potential disruptions to programme delivery, including in offshore contexts.

Commendation 3

General: The Panel commends their significant progress in establishing a robust overarching governance structure, which has enabled a coherent and consistent approach to delivering their provision.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

5.1.1 (b): The Panel recommends that ATU improves the visibility of visa and immigration guidance on its website to better support prospective international learners (non-timebound).

Recommendation 2

5.1.2 (h): The Panel recommends that ATU's draft framework for Agent Monitoring and Evaluation be formally adopted and implemented through appropriate governance structures to ensure full compliance with criterion 5.1.2 (h) within 24 weeks from the date of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Recommendation 3

5.2 (e): The Panel recommends that ATU include a defined maximum response timeframe in its official documentation, to be implemented within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Recommendation 4

5.5 (a): The Panel therefore recommends that ATU considers developing further focused in-session English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study (non-timebound).

Recommendation 5

5.6.2 (a): The Panel recommends that ATU formally integrates the offshore complaints procedures into its institutional policy framework to strengthen its oversight of all complaints (non-timebound).

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: Jeremy Bradshaw

Date: 03/10/2025

Signed:





November 12, 2025

**Institutional Response to the TrustEd Ireland (IEM) Assessment Report
(Higher Education Pathway)**

Dear TrustEd Ireland Secretariat,

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) welcomes receipt of the draft TrustEd Ireland Assessment Report issued as part of the International Education Mark (IEM) process. ATU appreciates the professionalism and rigour demonstrated by the International Review Panel throughout the review and recognises both the clarity and efficiency with which the process was managed by the TrustEd Ireland Secretariat and the Panel.

Having reviewed the draft report in full, the University considers the findings to be fair, balanced, and reflective of its current position and progress in international education. A clarification has been provided in the accompanying Factual Accuracy Report in relation to Criterion 5.5(d).

ATU welcomes the Panel's positive conclusion regarding the University's compliance with the requirements of the TrustEd Ireland International Education Mark and its recommendation that the University be authorised to use the statutory Quality Mark. The University further welcomes the Panel's observations regarding ATU's strategic direction, collaborative cross-functional approach, and commitment to continuous quality enhancement in international education. ATU notes the conditions and recommendations outlined in the report and will progress these in line with established institutional processes.

ATU acknowledges the constructive observations relating to the ongoing embedding of processes for monitoring collaborative and transnational provision and for ensuring consistency in international student supports. The University remains fully committed to

sustaining and further strengthening its quality assurance, governance, and student-support frameworks as the University continues to mature and evolve.

ATU wishes to thank QQI, the Panel members, and the TrustEd Ireland Secretariat for their constructive engagement and guidance throughout this process.

We look forward to the Approvals and Reviews Committee's consideration of the report and to progressing towards full authorisation to use the International Education Mark.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Billy Bennett

Registrar and Chief Academic Officer
Atlantic Technological University, Ireland.