



ERASMUS/INTERNATIONAL CHARTER POLICY STATEMENT 2014 – 2020 DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Context

Dundalk Institute of Technology was founded in 1970 as a Regional Technical College and re-designated as an Institute of Technology under the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1996. It received delegated authority from the Higher Education and Training Awards Council in 1994 to confer its own internationally-recognised awards, namely Higher Certificates (Level 6), Bachelor Degrees (Level 7 and 8) and taught Master Degrees (Level 9).

The Institute's mission is to provide the community with quality third-level education and services, relevant to the economic, social and cultural development of the region in a national and international context. It aims to promote personal responsibility among all its students and to enhance the professionalism of all its members in a supportive, inclusive and productive environment.

The Institute is organised into 4 Schools: Health and Science; Business and Humanities; Informatics and Creative Arts, and Engineering. There are 4,500 full-time students registered at the Institute, of which approximately 10% are international learners (450 ERASMUS+ exchange and non-EU).

The Institute's vision for internationalisation is guided by the principles contained in the Irish Government's *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, the Bologna Process, and the EU's policy on the modernisation of education. Internationalisation is characterised in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* as multi-faceted, necessitating international student recruitment and development of links with trading partners, but also entailing inter-institutional research, participation in multilateral initiatives, internationalisation of curricula and acquisition of intercultural competence in order for graduates to work in an export-driven, innovation-based economy. Engagement with the wider community needs to be embedded in the institution's mission through increased inward and outward mobility of its students and staff.

The Institute's current *Strategic Plan (2011 – 2016)* identifies local and international engagement as a core strategic theme and therein envisions graduates who are excellent in their discipline, can contribute globally and locally, can apply disciplinary and trans-disciplinary knowledge, with a particular focus on sustainability and entrepreneurship, and who have the capacity for critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, systems-thinking and lifelong learning.

Goal 8 of the Institute's Strategic Plan is dedicated to International Relationships, with the objectives of widening learner experience and global awareness through increasing international student registrations; promoting staff, student and research exchange programmes with international partners; and developing formal partnerships with higher education institutions in the developing world. Indicative actions embedded in these objectives include the consolidation of international partnerships, developing induction and learning supports for international students, expanding overseas traineeships, and study programmes for students and staff.

Inbound Mobility (EU and Non-EU)

All faculties at the Institute have been involved in internationalisation to varying degrees since the inception of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme in 1987. Student Mobility (Study and Traineeships), Staff Mobility (Teaching and Non-Teaching), and development of linkages with partner institutions are core to the Institute's international activities.

The International Office team of 5 Staff provide comprehensive supports to incoming ERASMUS (and non-EU) students, beginning with pre-arrival assistance with programme selection, processing of applications, coordination of learning agreements, and support with travel, visa, insurance, and financial matters. The International Office assists with sourcing accommodation in the nearby halls-of-residence, in private rented houses, and with Homestay families. Additional supports include an out-of-hours emergency service, counselling, and medical supports, and the coordination of cultural integration events by ESN and the International Office. International Welcome Days are hosted twice yearly, in September and January, over 2 days, providing students with introductions to academic and academic-support-services staff, ESN BUDDIES and returning ERASMUS students.

Academic mobility is tracked through the Institute's implementation of the European Credit Transfer System to facilitate academic recognition of all credits earned by incoming and outgoing students. Programme information for incoming students is publicised on the DkIT website, using the AKARI content-management system. Examination transcripts are sent to departing ERASMUS students and the partner university within 5 weeks of exam boards. The European Diploma Supplement is made available to all students. Departing ERASMUS students are invited to annual Focus Groups, feedback from which guides the Institute's continual improvement of its services to international students. Examples of continual improvement include the provision of a Prayer Room for students of the Muslim faith, the provision of additional examination briefings for overseas students, the enhanced reporting of the outbound Erasmus students' experiences on their return to the Institute; and the provision of an International Resource Room which caters for consultation space, and for pre-departure preparation of ERASMUS graduates.

The Institute currently has 380 international (non-EU students on campus) and has the target of increasing this figure to 450 by 2017. Recruitment is driven by one full-time Marketing Officer, supported by collaborations with overseas agents, principally in China, Malaysia, India, Nepal, Oman and Brazil. The strategy is to recruit up to 20% of the Institute's undergraduate students from outside of the EU by 2020.

The Institute offers a range of Foundation- and/or Pre-Sessional Intensive English programmes as a preparation for undergraduate study. Most non-EU students spend an average of 4 years at the Institute, with some students progressing to postgraduate programmes at Level 9. The Institute has additional articulation agreements for advanced entry in place with universities in China, Malaysia, Singapore, Brazil and Canada. The Institute is committed to developing its non-EU collaborations and to increasing the number of places available on programmes to overseas students. It has also developed international partnerships in the multi-disciplinary “Water Is Life” research project that aims to support sustainable water resource management in the developing world.

All non-EU students are provided with customised induction on arrival, (additional to International Welcome Days), conducted where available in the target language. The International Office has a full-time Chinese Staff member. Additional services provided to non-EU students include airport collection on arrival, medical, counselling and pastoral supports, pre-examination briefings, and support with celebrating cultural events.

The Institute is committed to meeting criteria to achieve Quality and Qualification Ireland’s proposed International Education Mark, intended for the establishment of a code of practice for the future provision of programmes to international students.

The Institute’s policy and procedures for Quality Assurance are benchmarked against the standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the European Higher Education area and are audited against these standards in 5-yearly Programmatic- and Institutional Reviews.

The Institute operates an Equality Policy, guaranteeing quality of access to all teaching and research programmes irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, or social background. Supports are provided for students with special needs, or physical disability, through the services of the Disability and Quality Office.

Outbound Mobility

The Institute is committed to promoting ERASMUS to all students. Strategies for increasing the numbers of students participating in ERASMUS+ include class visits by the ERASMUS Coordinator, peer-to-peer ERASMUS+ promotion through ESN Buddies, use of Social Media, one-to-one Study Abroad support by the International Office, pre-Departure Workshops, and ongoing engagement with Academic Coordinators Institute-wide. Study abroad options were restructured at the Institute’s Programmatic Review in 2013, with the embedding of an international mobility option for one semester onto many programmes (as an alternative in some instances to the traditional year-long, study-abroad model) and by diversifying the disciplines in which students can choose to study abroad. These strategies are resulting in significant numbers of students from traditional and emerging programmes going on ERASMUS. Disciplines include General and Psychiatric Nursing, Social Care, Applied Music, Creative Arts, Agricultural Science and Hospitality. First-cycle programmes are prioritised for student mobility, with scope to develop mobility at second-cycle.

The wider availability of English at partner institutions is resulting in enhanced study and traineeship possibilities in the EU for students and staff. Notwithstanding the increased availability of programmes delivered through English in its partner colleges, the Institute remains committed to

the promotion of study abroad in French and Spanish for its Business with Language students. Complementary modern language initiatives at the Institute include inter-institutional tandem-language-learning projects, and annual intercultural exchange visits between the Business and Humanities Departments with partner colleges IUT Le Havre and IUT Béthune, giving students the impetus and enthusiasm to progress to year-long study abroad.

Recent years have seen a rise in the numbers of students interested in ERASMUS+ Traineeships. This trend is set to continue, and the International Office, in partnership with the Placement Office and respective Academic Coordinators continues to source traineeships overseas. Management of the Traineeship includes orientation of the student towards the work-place, management of the student during placement, employer liaison, evaluation of the student, and management of the ERASMUS+ grant payments in compliance with National Agency requirements. The International Office also liaises with Institute's Careers Service to promote language employment opportunities for international students with multinational companies based in the Dundalk area.

Central to the promotion of mobility is the development and nurturing of links with new and existing EU partner institutions, and enterprises. The Institute currently has 60+ partnerships with universities of applied sciences, and a number of traditional universities, predominantly in France, Germany and Spain, arising from a formerly high language demand for partner universities in those countries. Recent years have witnessed the proliferation of bilateral agreements with partner institutions in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, and in some instances, with partner colleges outside of Europe.

All inter-institutional agreements have been recently reviewed in preparation for the ERASMUS+ programme, with a view to achieving more equal ratios of Inbound/Outbound student exchange flows (currently 5:1 Inbound to Outbound). The Institute's strategy is to collaborate more intensively with a number of partners on teaching, learning and research initiatives, focusing on partner colleges who are committed to the delivery of innovative programmes, using state-of-the-art facilities, and sharing best practice in teaching, learning and research. The Institute has a memorandum of understanding in place with Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Finland for collaboration in joint programme development, and combined research ageing and health, and sustainability – two of the strategic research themes identified in the Institute's *Strategic Plan*. The Institute also works with the Heilbronn University, Germany in shared teaching and study exchange for up to one semester in its M.B.S programme.

The Institute has recently been conferred with the authority to make joint awards in collaboration with other providers where due diligence and negotiated agreements ensure that programmes leading to these awards are consistent with the Institute's academic standards and with those defined by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) under the terms of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012. The Institute is committed to scoping joint award possibilities with long-standing, publicly-funded, state-endorsed, European university partners.

The Institute has successfully applied for, and implemented a number of KA 2 Strategic Partnerships (formerly ERASMUS Intensive Programmes) in recent years. These include:

- Lead partner in *IP in Sustainable Living Communities* (with FH Joanneum, Austria, and Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Finland, 2012 – 2014).

- Partner in *IP in Creative Aesthetic Learning Processes* (with Artesis Plantijn University College, Belgium and Stord Haugesund University College, Norway, 2012 – 2013).
- Partner in *IP Walkabout in Mobile Gaming Technologies* (with ISP Gaya, Centria University of Applied Sciences, University of Lodz, Artesis Plantijn University College and University of Vigo, 2013).

The Institute has a national profile as a location which caters for a high proportion of learners from backgrounds traditionally under-represented in third-level education. The ensuing challenge is to provide more mobility opportunities for as many students as possible through a range of measures including the internationalisation of curricula, and short-stay overseas mobility experiences, such as those provided by the successful implementation of the Intensive Programme model.

Technology-enhanced learning and specifically, blended learning will become an integral part of all programmes at the Institute by 2016. The Institute is committed to blended learning initiatives with overseas partner institutions and to explore distance learning models that will enhance inter-institutional collaboration, sharing of best practice, and continuous professional development.

The International Office implements an Institute Quality Management system that tracks all operational aspects of the ERASMUS+ Programme for outbound students and staff, including recording and reporting of financial and academic data, as required by the National Agency. Considerable time and resources are invested by the Institute to ensure the integrity of its international operation, and that the implementation of its mobility programmes is robust and quality-assured.

Information on all international activities is publicised at www.dkit.ie/international