



# INVESTING IN GLOBAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-15

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Report of the High-Level Group on International Education to the Tánaiste and  
Minister for Education and Skills





## Executive Summary

*This executive summary is available in a number of languages on the Education Ireland web site: [www.educationireland.com](http://www.educationireland.com).*

### The opportunity for Ireland

Ireland, as a small, open European economy, relies fundamentally on international engagement. An internationalised education system in Ireland has a crucial role to play in maintaining Ireland's international profile and attractiveness by educating the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and decision-makers in our partner-countries, by giving our own students the intercultural expertise demanded in the global economy, and by enhancing the direct link with Ireland for members of our global diaspora who choose to come home to study.

The High-Level Group on International Education takes the view that, from a national perspective, the most compelling rationale for internationalisation is investment in future global relationships: with students educated in Ireland who will become our advocates overseas, with educational institutions that will be the research and teaching partners of the future, and with the countries that will be Ireland's next trading and business partners.

Internationalisation also provides a means of enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and research in Ireland and makes a significant contribution to our broader ambition as a global innovation hub.

Ireland has intrinsic strengths that have the potential to provide it with a competitive advantage in becoming a leading centre of international education. Nevertheless, competition in attracting talented international students and in developing mutually beneficial partnerships with globally ranked and respected institutions overseas is considerable.

Ireland must offer a high-quality education, strong integration with domestic students, and an unparalleled experience that adds significant value to the career outcomes of all who are educated here.

In the longer term, success will be judged by who we have educated and how well rather than simply by how many.

For Ireland to succeed in this environment, internationalisation will need to be developed as a long-term and sustainable process, based on high-quality and balanced engagement with international partners. This will include facilitating greater outward mobility and international experience of Irish staff and students, widening and deepening collaborative institutional and research links, internationalising curricula, further developing our involvement in transnational education (i.e. the delivery of Irish education overseas), continuing to engage in EU and multilateral initiatives, and contributing to overseas development.

The educational interests of international students, their safety and security, their integration with the wider student body and their general experience of Ireland are central to our concerns.

## Objectives and targets

**Primary objective: Ireland will become internationally recognised and ranked as a world leader in the delivery of high-quality international education by providing a unique experience and long-term value to students.**

## Other objectives and targets

### *By 2015 Ireland will—*

- increase total international student numbers (including full-time, part-time, and exchange) in higher education institutions to 38,000, an increase of over 12,000 or 50% on current numbers
- increase the number of full-time international students in higher education to 25,500, an increase of 8,500 or 50% on current numbers (this corresponds to an increase in the national proportion of such students from approximately 10% to 13%)
- increase the proportion of international students undertaking advanced research from 10% to 15% (3,800 students)
- increase the proportion of international students undertaking taught postgraduate programmes from 13% to 20% (5,100 students)
- increase the number of exchange and junior year abroad students from outside the EEA to 6,000, from its present level of approximately 3,600
- increase the number of English-language students by 25% to 120,000
- increase the number of offshore students (i.e. those undertaking Irish education programmes outside the jurisdiction) by 50% to 4,500
- enhance the economic impact of international education by some €300 million, to approximately €1.2 billion in total.

### *By 2015 Irish higher education institutions will—*

- strengthen institutional relationships with priority partner-countries to include greater collaboration in mobility, research, and teaching
- increase outward mobility of staff members and students to make significant progress towards Bologna and EU goals in this regard.

### *By 2015 the English-language sector will—*

- significantly diversify to include more higher education pathway programmes, teacher training courses, greater transnational delivery, and further collaboration with the wider tourism sector
- increase direct employment levels by 25%, to a target of 1,250 full-time jobs.

## Making it happen: Ten strategic actions to improve Ireland's competitive position

The following ten high-level actions are proposed to enhance Ireland's competitive position as a centre for international education and to underpin achievement of the above objectives and targets:

- 1. Ireland will enhance its performance through partnership and collaboration.**
- 2. The Education Ireland brand will be redeveloped and national promotion and marketing will be strengthened.**
- 3. Quality will be at the heart of Ireland's international education offering.**
- 4. Ireland's visa, immigration and labour market access policies will be strong and competitive.**
- 5. Ireland's higher education institutions will be globally competitive and internationally oriented.**
- 6. Ireland will develop targeted and relevant international education offerings.**
- 7. Government policies and actions will be consistent and supportive.**
- 8. Ireland will strengthen its networks of influence.**
- 9. Outward mobility by Irish staff members and students will be encouraged.**
- 10. North-South and EU co-operation will enhance Ireland's international education performance.**

Further details on each of these actions are provided below.

### Strategic action 1: Ireland will enhance its performance through partnership and collaboration

In 2009 the Government established a new framework for the promotion, quality assurance and co-ordination of international education. This involved terminating the operation of two existing agencies, the Advisory Council for English Language Schools (ACELS) and the International Education Board Ireland (IEBI), which were responsible, respectively, for the recognition of English-language programmes and branding and for the promotion of higher education overseas. Their responsibilities and resources were reallocated to existing, larger-scale agencies: Enterprise Ireland was given sole responsibility for the promotion and branding of international higher education, while the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was given responsibility for quality assurance, including the recognition of English-language programmes and management of the internationalisation register (which regulates labour market access by non-EEA students) pending the establishment of a new Quality Mark for international education. The Government also established the High-Level Group on International Education and gave it responsibility for national co-ordination and the development of this strategy.

Ireland will now enhance partnership and collaboration at national level by building on the above new framework through the following actions:

- Internationalisation will be developed in partnership between the Government and education sectors and on the basis of collaboration within the education system, including closer co-operation between the higher education and English-language sectors.

- The High-Level Group on International Education and the four working groups it has now established (i.e. on implementation and market development/access, quality assurance and student experience, sectoral development, and branding), together with the standing Interdepartmental Committee on Student Immigration, will facilitate a co-ordinated national approach.
- Collaborative actions will take place in agreed priority partner-countries. Recruitment targets, agreed with the visa and immigration authorities, will be developed for these countries. Enhanced market intelligence will be made available through a process led by Enterprise Ireland.
- Ireland will also develop enhanced relations with trusted education agents recruiting international students on behalf of Irish institutions. Actions will include developing lists of approved agents, sharing information, training agents, and liaising between trusted agents and visa officials.

### **Strategic action 2: The Education Ireland brand will be redeveloped, and national promotion and marketing will be strengthened**

- The Education Ireland national brand will be redeveloped by Enterprise Ireland and will encompass higher education and the English-language sector. Institutions will contribute to a central funding pool to support generic promotion and localised marketing.
- In addition to supporting State agencies in the promotion of education, Ireland's diplomatic network will continue to play a crucial role in promoting international education.

### **Strategic action 3: Quality will be at the heart of Ireland's international education offering**

- Statutory provision will be made for quality assurance of education and related services provided to international students in the forthcoming Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill.
- A statutory Code of Practice and a Quality Mark, to be awarded to educational institutions that meet certain criteria, will be developed and managed by Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQAI), the amalgamated agency to be established in 2011.
- The Code of Practice will cover issues such as marketing, recruitment and enrolment, information, orientation and induction, fees, accommodation, academic matters (including alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and progression), support, welfare services and learner protection.
- The Code of Practice and Quality Mark will apply to institutions and will be used by State bodies for the purposes of visas and immigration, access to the labour market, and participation in national branding and promotional activities.
- Ireland's inherent advantages as a destination for international students will be enhanced by the provision of appropriate services at institutional level to support the safety, security and well-being of students. Ireland's offering will be based on strong integration between international and Irish students.

## **Strategic action 4: Ireland's visa, immigration and labour market access policies will be strong and competitive**

A strengthened immigration and visa regime, details of which have been published recently by the Department of Justice and Law Reform, will improve Ireland's general competitiveness in the area of international education through the following actions:

- Shared recruitment targets will be developed by the educational sector and agreed with the visa and immigration authorities.
- Immigration rules will be strengthened and aligned with the Quality Mark to the benefit of all high-quality institutions.
- Degree programme visas will be fast-tracked.
- Students on short-term language courses will be treated as educational tourists and will not have to meet the usual standard conditions for students.
- The graduate work scheme will be extended to allow all graduates at NFQ level 8 and above to remain in Ireland for up to one year for the purpose of gaining relevant work experience or developing a business idea.
- The children of students pursuing PhD programmes or participating in an academic programme agreed between Ireland and another state (within certain conditions) will be permitted to attend State-funded schools in Ireland. This will also apply to other students who pay an immigration levy to cover the State's costs of providing their children's education.
- The immigration authorities will consider temporary staff deployments to Ireland's overseas visa offices when large numbers of visa applications are to be processed.
- The immigration authorities are willing to work with trusted education agents, including the support of training initiatives for such agents.
- Turnaround times for all visa offices will be published quarterly to give greater certainty to applicants.
- The immigration authorities have issued a standing invitation to all stakeholders to submit workable, practical suggestions on how the processing of visa applications could be made more efficient or effective on an ongoing basis.
- The immigration authorities will continue to work in partnership with educational stakeholders on the High-Level Group to develop Ireland's international offering and the opening of new markets and opportunities in the higher education and English-language sectors.

## **Strategic action 5: Ireland's higher education institutions will be globally competitive and internationally oriented**

- Higher education institutions will develop comprehensive internationalisation strategies.
- Institutions should have regard to the medium term national target, to be reached in the period between now and 2020, that international students should comprise 15% of the full-time student population when setting their own targets. They may seek to recruit higher numbers if they have the institutional capacity and the level of student support services to facilitate integration.



- Internationalised curricula should be a key component of internationalisation.
- Tuition fees will continue to have regard to the primacy of maintaining high-quality education and an exceptional student experience.
- The Irish quality assurance authorities will consider the quality assurance implications of the growing importance of transnational education as part of Ireland's overall international education offering.

## Strategic action 6: Ireland will develop targeted and relevant international education offerings

- Ireland will target international students who are strongly motivated in terms of their personal and professional development and who will benefit from the strengths of the Irish education system.
- Present and expected capacity for international students over the period of the strategy will be assessed and will be used to inform the development of disciplines and programmes of relevance to prospective students and institutional partners.
- Ireland's English-language product offering will continue to be diversified to include closer integration with tourism packages, pathway programmes to higher education, executive and corporate training, participation in teacher-training and capacity-building programmes in partner-countries, offshore provision of courses, and increased use of e-learning, including partnership with higher education providers.

## Strategic action 7: Government policies and actions will be consistent and supportive

- The High-Level Group and its four working groups will be used to facilitate consistency of policy and approach among Government departments.
- The following new scholarship programmes, which will be operated and funded in partnership between the Government and education institutions, will replace the existing Department of Education and Skills bilateral schemes:
  - *The **Government of Ireland International Scholarships** will seek to attract high-calibre international students.*
  - *The **New Frontiers Programme** will be open to staff and students in Irish higher education institutions that hold a Quality Mark and who wish to undertake a period of study in an institution in a non-English-speaking partner-country outside the EEA.*
  - *The **Government of Ireland English Language Educators' Scholarship** will provide for a period of study in Ireland by talented English-language educators who will become advocates for Ireland in their home country.*
- The Department of Education and Skills will maintain a small strategic fund to be entitled the Internationalisation Development Fund and to be used to fund one-off specific research and other initiatives designed to improve Ireland's position as a centre for international education.

### **Strategic action 8: Ireland will strengthen its networks of influence**

- Educational institutions, working with Irish diplomatic missions and Enterprise Ireland offices abroad, will facilitate the continued affinity of international alumni with Ireland.
- Alumni strategies will form part of the wider approach to Ireland's diaspora and networks of influence.

### **Strategic action 9: Outward mobility by Irish staff members and students will be encouraged**

- Specific targets and strategies for outward mobility will be set at institutional level.
- Outward mobility will be part of institutions' overall internationalisation strategy and, where appropriate, will be an expected part of education programmes.
- Existing mobility programmes at EU level (e.g. the Erasmus programme) and those in development for the future will be central to efforts to maximise the benefits of outward mobility.

### **Strategic action 10: North-South and EU co-operation will enhance Ireland's international education performance**

- The potential for mutually beneficial North-South collaboration in the area of international education will be explored.
- Ireland will actively participate in the development of a proposed EU international higher education strategy, and proposed developments in relation to EU mobility programmes, to maximise Irish interests, in line with the policies outlined in this strategy.

### **Implementation arrangements**

The High-Level Group will be responsible for overall implementation and progress towards the national objectives and targets will be monitored through publication of an annual report on internationalisation. Implementation will be phased over the full course of the five-year strategy. An indicative timetable for delivery in year 1 is set out overleaf.

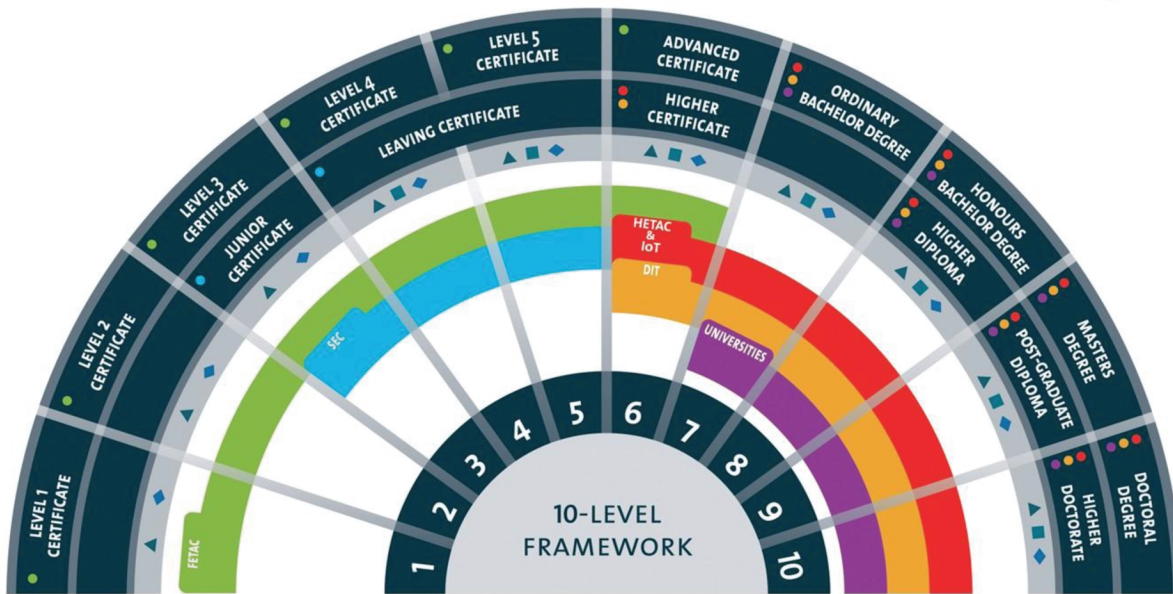
**Indicative implementation timetable: Year 1**

<b>Quarter 3 (Q3) 2010</b>	Publication of details of new Student Immigration regime by Department of Justice and Law Reform.
<b>Q4 2010</b>	<p>Publication of Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill.</p> <p>Commencement of DES discussions with partner-countries on replacement of existing bilateral scholarship arrangements</p>
<b>Q1 2011</b>	<p>Commencement of implementation of new Student Immigration regime by Department of Justice and Law Reform</p> <p>Introduction of new Education Ireland brand by Enterprise Ireland.</p> <p>Agreement on priority partner-countries and visa and immigration targets for 2011 by Working Group on implementation and market development/access.</p> <p>Implementation of pilot project on enhanced co-operation with agents in India led by Enterprise Ireland.</p> <p>Implementation of new International Education Promotional Fund on a pilot basis by Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.</p>
<b>Q2 2011</b>	Meeting of High-Level Group on International Education. Review of implementation progress and consideration of implementation timetable for remainder of Year 1 and for Year 2.
<b>Q3 2011</b>	<p>Publication of research on economic impact of international education carried out on behalf of the High-Level Group on International Education</p> <p>First publication of <i>Internationalisation of Irish Education: Annual Report</i> by Enterprise Ireland.</p> <p>Expected enactment of Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill and establishment of Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQAI).</p> <p>Following the establishment of QQAI, commencement of development of Code of Practice and Quality Mark. Implementation schedule to be approved and set out by the Board of QQAI.</p> <p>Completion of initial capacity survey and foresight exercise on sectoral development by the HEA.</p> <p>Launch of new national scholarship schemes by the HEA and Fáilte Ireland.</p>

## Annex I: National Framework of Qualifications

# NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

Údarás Náisiúnta  
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann  
National Qualifications  
Authority of Ireland



### AWARDING BODIES

- FETAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (*Department of Education & Science*)
- HETAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- IOT - Institute of Technology (*make their own awards at specified levels under Delegated Authority from HETAC*)
- DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities

### AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four types of award in the National Framework of Qualifications

- **Major Awards:** are the principal class of awards made at a level
- ▲ **Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- **Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- ◆ **Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



## Annex II: Members of the High-Level Group on International Education

<b>Mr. Paddy McDonagh (chair)</b>	Assistant Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills
<b>Ms. Orla Battersby</b>	Manager, Business and Consumer Services Department, Enterprise Ireland
<b>Mr. Tom Boland</b>	Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority
<b>Ms. Claire Byrne</b>	Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
<b>Dr. Robert Flood</b>	Head of International Affairs, Dublin Institute of Technology
<b>Dr. Ruth Freeman</b>	Director of Enterprise and International Affairs, Science Foundation Ireland
<b>Ms. Dympna Hayes</b>	Director, Bilateral Trade, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation
<b>Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty</b>	President, Griffith College, Dublin
<b>Ms. Geraldine Jinks</b>	Executive Officer, International Section, Department of Education and Skills, Secretary to the Group
<b>Mr. John Lynch</b>	Special Adviser on International Education, Higher Education Authority
<b>Ms. Elizabeth McCullough</b>	First Secretary, Promoting Ireland Abroad Division, Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Mr. Séamus Mc Loughlin</b>	Principal Officer, International Section, Department of Education and Skills
<b>Dr. Terry McWade</b>	Deputy Chief Executive, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
<b>Mr. Keith Moynes</b>	Assistant Principal Officer, International Section, Department of Education and Skills
<b>Ms. Ethna Murphy</b>	Manager, Leisure Tourism, Fáilte Ireland
<b>Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin</b>	President, Athlone Institute of Technology
<b>Mr. Phil O'Flaherty</b>	Principal Officer, Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Policy Unit, Department of Education & Skills
<b>Mr. Ray O'Leary</b>	Principal Officer, Tourism Division, Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport

<b>Ms. Gerri O'Sullivan</b>	Assistant Principal Officer, Tourism Division, Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport
<b>Mr. Kevin O'Sullivan</b>	Principal Officer, INIS, Department of Justice and Law Reform
<b>Ms. Sheila Power</b>	Director, Irish Council for International Students
<b>Prof. Lawrence Taylor</b>	Vice President for International Affairs, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
<b>Ms. Louise Tobin</b>	Director of International Student Recruitment and Strategy, University College Cork
<b>Mr. Justin Quinn</b>	Managing Director, Centre for English Studies

The Secretariat for the High-Level Group on International Education is provided by the International Section of the Department of Education and Skills.







