

A photograph of three people (two women and one man) standing in a meeting room, overlaid with an orange-to-blue gradient.

Strategic Plan 2022-2024

A photograph of four people (three women and one man) standing in a meeting room, overlaid with a green-to-yellow gradient.

Welcome from Chairperson and Executive Director

The Irish Council for International Students has grown so much since it was founded 52 years ago. This strategic plan gave us the opportunity to examine our strengths and to look at areas in which we could do better. As part of this plan, we consulted students, our members and key stakeholders. We identified several areas of focus including student supports, sustainability, tackling racism, advocacy and improving the student experience.

This strategic plan gave us the opportunity to look at our past and our future as an organisation. Shaped by recent learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic and informed by recent research conducted with students, we are pleased to present a plan for the next three years that has students at its centre and that is both ambitious and practical.

Our growth as an advocacy organisation will ensure that the concerns and voices of international students in Ireland are heard by policy makers. Our vision for international education in Ireland aims to uphold Ireland's place on the world stage as a quality destination for students. Furthermore, this plan looks internally at ICOS itself and how we can become more sustainable and effective as an organisation.

We would like to thank Sandra Velthuis from Whitebarn Consulting for her work and guidance in creating this strategic plan. We would also like to thank everyone who took the time to give us feedback and insights as part of our consultation process.

There is a great strength in working together and ICOS' members are a unique network of experts in the field of international education. We are looking forward to realising the goals in this strategic plan by working together.



Laura Harmon

Laura Harmon
Executive Director, ICOS



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Mooney'.

Shane Mooney
Chairperson of ICOS

Our Vision

All international students in Ireland achieve their educational goals, are treated equitably by the education providers that host them and are valued by wider society.

Our Mission

Protect and enhance the rights of international students in Ireland while championing their contribution in the places they study and in the communities in which they live.

Our Values

- Student-centred
- Collaborative
- Inclusive
- Solutions-focused
- Supportive
- Dependable

What we do

We continually strive to ensure that the benefits brought about by international education are recognised, the barriers faced by international students in Ireland are minimised, and that these students are integrated into Irish academic life and wider society. We apply a determined diversity, equity and inclusion approach to all of our activities.

This strategy outlines what we will do over the next three years to bring about as much positive social change as possible. We have five strategic aims, one for each of the five levels at which we work:

1. With international students
2. With the schools and institutions that they attend
3. With society more broadly
4. Globally
5. Within ICOS



Strategic Aim 1:

Provide prospective, current and returning international students with the supports they want and need

Objectives

- 1.1 Include the international student voice in all of our work
- 1.2 Publicise ICOS to international students initially and keep them informed throughout their studies in Ireland
- 1.3 Provide international students with the information, advice and advocacy they need to have a positive experience in Ireland
- 1.4 Provide international students with training that enables them to optimise their experience of studying in Ireland
- 1.5 Provide international students with opportunities to get to know and communicate with each other
- 1.6 Undertake research about and with international students and act on the findings
- 1.7 Understand the needs of international students with additional support needs to ensure equity and inclusivity
- 1.8 Deliver a growing and professional Ireland Fellows Programme that operates in harmony with the rest of our work
- 1.9 Work with and collaborate with international students and student groups on common goals

The intended outcomes

- International students feel supported
- International students are able to exercise their rights
- International students experience less difficulties in their international education journey
- International students have an understanding of the culture in which they are living
- International students feel part of the community





Strategic Aim 2:

Provide ICOS members, schools and institutions with the supports they need in order to offer the best possible international student experience

Objectives

- 2.1 Engage proactively with multiple stakeholders within member organisations
- 2.2 Run training events, both off-the-shelf and bespoke, for staff working in any schools and institutions that have international students, with a particular focus on intercultural awareness and inclusion
- 2.3 Facilitate inter-institution working groups to progress issues of relevance
- 2.4 Encourage greater involvement of higher education institutions in the Ireland Fellows Programme
- 2.5 Organise an annual conference on best practice in international education

The intended outcomes

- Staff in schools and institutions feel supported
- Many schools and institutions are engaged in our work
- Appreciation within schools and institutions of all the benefits of international education
- Schools and institutions offer a quality, rights-based international student experience

Strategic Aim 3:

Broadly promote the benefits of international education and the needs of international students

Objectives

- 3.1 Lobby policy-makers on issues relevant to the expressed needs of international students
- 3.2 Nurture and make use of positive relationships with key media contacts
- 3.3 Enable greater intercultural sharing between international and domestic students
- 3.4 Explore the viability of an international student award scheme/ceremony
- 3.5 Facilitate volunteering by international students
- 3.6 Open up employment pathways for international students (during and post-study)

The intended outcomes

- Public policy that is supportive of international education, its students and their rights
- Day-to-day practice that makes things simpler and better for international students
- More and improved media coverage about international students
- Greater public awareness of the multiple benefits of international education
- Reduced racism and other forms of prejudice towards international students





Strategic Aim 4:

Make active connections between the international education experience in Ireland and the rest of the world

Objectives

- 4.1 Firmly position our work within the Sustainable Development Goals framework
- 4.2 Foster continued connection between alumni of the Ireland Fellows Programme and Ireland
- 4.3 Keep informed of best practice in international education around the world
- 4.4 Share our own experience and knowledge of international education beyond Ireland

The intended outcomes

- A minor but meaningful contribution made towards global development
- Enhanced reputation for Ireland in the area of intercultural competence

Strategic Aim 5:

Create and nurture the conditions to be an impactful and sustainable organisation

Objectives

- 5.1 Ensure full compliance with the Charities' Governance Code
- 5.2 Be a financially viable organisation, with adequate and appropriate funding and capital assets at our disposal
- 5.3 Recruit and retain the best people to deliver the work of ICOS
- 5.4 Grow our membership and seek the active engagement of members
- 5.5 Ensure systems and processes are fit for purpose for a growing organisation
- 5.6 Undertake a review of our name and brand and implement recommendations
- 5.7 Work with other organisations that enable us to achieve our aims

The intended outcomes

- Reduced risk
- Increased and more diversified funding
- Greater staff capacity and staff retention
- A larger and more engaged membership
- Increased efficiency





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