



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

foreward

A Chairde,

It has been my privilege to serve as ICOS Chairperson through 2018 which was yet another very active year for the organisation.

ICOS continued to be a strong voice for international students on issues that are of concern to students themselves and our members who support them. Our aim is that all students derive benefit and value from their education in Ireland and have a very positive experience while living here. Our regional forums for international students which, in 2018, were held in Dublin, Limerick and Galway indicate that while Ireland remains a popular destination which by and large meets students' expectations, we still fall short in some areas not least in relation to the availability and affordability of suitable student accommodation in certain areas. Students can do more for themselves too but often are not aware of the various services available even on their own campuses so finding more effective ways to communicate with international students is a key message for all staff working directly with students.

ICOS is also committed to increasing its level of engagement among member organisations. We will continue to work towards ways of increasing our contribution to the development of International Education among member organisations through the increased development of regular workshops and seminars aimed at benefiting staff and colleagues involved in International Education. The layout and focus of the past two AGM's are prime examples of ways in which ICOS can assist in providing the staff of member organisations practical skills, knowledge and expertise in working across this sector.

On the policy front, ICOS continued to actively represent the shared interests of members and international students and in 2018, we were active on five national forums including the High Level group on Internationalisation while our annual seminar explored the effectiveness of orientation services for international students and asked the question, "Effective Orientation of International Students - are we getting it right?"

ICOS continues to be very proud of its association with Ireland's Fellowship Programme and in 2018 we were happy to be awarded a new contract for services by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade/Irish Aid to the end of June 2021. The fellowship programme continues to grow and diversify and in 2018, ICOS was delighted to support the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in the opening of a new Fellowship Programme for Palestine.

We are fortunate to have a committed ICOS staff team and were delighted to welcome



Ben Finnegan,
ICOS Chairperson

some new members to the organisation this year. We were saddened to see Sheila Power's wonderful era as Director of ICOS come to an end but equally wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

With Sheila's retirement saw the opportunity for ICOS to recruit a new leader of the organisation and the Board of Directors were extremely pleased and impressed with the high level of interest in the role. As Chairperson it was great privilege leading the recruitment process aided by my fellow Board of Director colleagues and I have no doubt that Ms. Sarah Lennon will be an undoubtedly successful Executive Director of ICOS and wish her and her team all the very best of luck in the years ahead. I thank them for their hard work throughout the year and I offer my thanks also to my colleagues on the ICOS Board who generously give of their time and expertise to make sure we deliver on our strategy to make Ireland a welcoming and safe place for international students.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as Chairperson of the ICOS Board of Directors over the past two years. As I step down from the role I wish all my colleagues and friends who work for and with ICOS the very best of fortune over the coming months and years as we all work together to help facilitate an excellent student experience here in Ireland for all international students.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Ben Finnegan



Strategic Goals

In its new strategy, ICOS has articulated four goals against which we will measure our achievements as follows:

- 1. INFLUENCE POLICY AND STANDARDS**
Represent the shared interests of our members and international students to ensure we have a policy environment which is respectful of international students' rights and promotes practices and services that are underpinned by quality and good customer care;
- 2. BUILD CAPACITY AND VOICE**
Strengthen the capacity of our members to deliver quality services to international students while also empowering international students to pursue their rights;
- 3. SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION**
Support and showcase the important contribution of international education to international development;
- 4. STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANISATION**
Re-brand and enhance our organisational profile and build a sustainable and well-run membership organisation that is responsive to change.



ICOS is contracted by Irish Aid to provide professional services in the delivery of Ireland's Fellowship Programme.



ICOS acknowledges support from the Department of Education towards projects aimed at improving the international student experience.



An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Review of Activities 2018

1. Influence Policy and Standards

ICOS seeks to act as a voice for both students and higher education institutions in advocating for good policy and practice in international education.

ICOS represents members on the High Level Group which advises and supports the Government on its International Education Strategy. ICOS also represents members on other relevant national forums concerned with student learning and student support services ensuring that the international student perspective is considered in all discussions. In 2018, ICOS attended all Quarterly meetings with INIS and the GNIB where ICOS members' questions on student immigration policy and service issues were addressed.

The main focus of ICOS' commentary in 2018 was on barriers to internationalisation such as the lack of suitable affordable student accommodation; problems related to private health insurance cover for international students on foot of regulatory changes and immigration policy and customer service issues.

Summary:

In 2018, ICOS was represented on and actively contributed to national forums attending over 25 meetings and conferences. Our formal representation includes:

- High Level Group on Internationalisation
- Immigrant Immigration Network (IIN)
- QQI Consultative Group
- CELS/QQI Recognition Committee
- QQI Consultative Groups on the IEM Codes of Practice for both Higher Education and the ELT sector

2. Build Capacity and Voice

ICOS seeks to strengthen the capacity of our members to deliver quality services to international students while also empowering international students to pursue their rights.

Key activities in 2018:

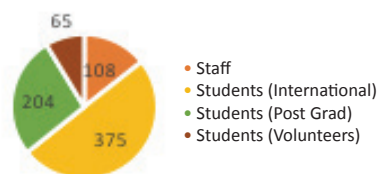
Training

2018 was a busy year for ICOS in the delivery of our training workshops. There was a 37% increase in the number of trainings provided compared to 2017 (33 trainings delivered in 2018 compared to 24 in 2017). There was a continued increase in demand for the provision of Intercultural Awareness and Cross Cultural Communication briefings to post-graduate student groups as well as to undergraduate students travelling abroad for study or volunteering opportunities. These workshops encourage students to reflect on their own culture and appreciate the cultures of the communities with whom they will be working or to learn from the cultural diversity in their own classrooms. ICOS also continued its work with newly arrived international students and delivered information and orientation sessions to 375 students.

Support to staff of ICOS members remained a core focus of ICOS' training initiatives and 11 workshops were delivered in 2018 to over 100 student support and academic staff in ICOS member HEIs. The importance of building the capacity of staff in the context of the internationalisation of Higher Education was raised also by the ICOS Director, Sheila Power, during her contribution to the panel discussion at the joint HEA/QQI/USI Conference in November on Best Practice in Student

Centred Approaches in Education & Training. Sheila Power also used the conference platform to reiterate one of ICOS' key messages which is that there is a need for a change in culture and mind-set towards international students. International students are an asset to our community and add value and quality to the teaching and learning experience for all students.

Training Participants 2018



Annual Seminar

ICOS hosted a very successful seminar in June 2018 on the theme, "Effective Orientation of International Students – are we getting it right? An experienced panel of speakers presented relevant research findings and shared their experience on the topic. The seminar was generously hosted by TU Dublin (formerly DIT) at its new Grangegorman Campus. Over 60 participants attended the event.

Student Forums – Dublin, Limerick and Galway

In November 2018, in collaboration with USI and ICOS institutional members in Dublin (TCD), Galway (NUIG) and Limerick (LIT), ICOS organised 3 international student forums to capture feedback from students on their social and academic experiences in Ireland. In total, 53 international students across 9 HEIs participated in the forums, the findings of

which will be captured in a report to be published in 2019.

Information and Advice

ICOS continued to provide a telephone and email advice service for international students and staff in immigrant advice centres and higher education institutions and mediated in a significant number of individual cases involving students who were experiencing problems. An average of just under 60 queries is handled monthly with most questions relating to immigration and visas (194). A significant number also involved disputes with schools (133). Most queries (80%) came directly from individual students or those acting on their behalf while 20% came from ICOS member institutions. Overall demand for ICOS information and advices increased by 20% in 2018 compared to 2017.



Table: Information and Advice queries and casework 2018

Query Type	Immigration Support to Public 2018												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Accommodation	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	5
Course query	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	4	1	3	4	1	19
Fellowship	6	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	4	23	10	3	52
Insurance	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	4
Internship	2	2	2	3	0	0	1	1	2	3	4	1	21
Other	8	2	6	5	1	4	7	5	10	8	8	7	71
Scholarship	0	3	3	2	3	4	3	0	0	3	0	2	23
School closure	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	0	2	3	15
School dispute	2	2	46	13	15	10	12	2	7	12	9	3	133
Stamp 1G	4	3	3	5	3	2	5	2	2	4	3	3	39
Studying in Ireland	5	6	7	3	1	1	3	3	4	3	2	1	39
Visa	28	14	12	12	26	21	16	10	21	19	10	5	194
Employment	0	2	6	2	2	4	1	2	2	3	2	2	28
Report racism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Course fees	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	6
Media	0	1	2	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	11
Visa Registration	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	7	4	5	2	31
Total queries	60	39	92	54	60	49	56	37	65	87	60	34	693

3. Support International Development through Higher Education

In 2018, ICOS continued its collaboration with Irish Aid on the management of the Fellowship Programme successfully bidding for a new contract for services to the middle of 2021. The Fellowship Programme offers qualified candidates the opportunity to pursue masters' level studies in disciplines relevant to their countries' development priorities.

On the operational front, ICOS processed 170 applications for Irish Aid Fellowships across its seven different strands. Ultimately 84 (-5 on 2017) fellows were offered awards in Irish higher education institutions and a further 11 (-12 on 2017) candidates were offered awards in regional institutions. As part of its contract with

Irish Aid, ICOS also manages a dedicated website for the Irish Aid fellowship programme available at <http://www.irishaidfellowships.ie/>. This website greatly enhances the visibility of the Fellowship Programme and facilitates the transfer of information to all major stakeholders.

ICOS also supports the development of Irish Aid's fellowship alumni networks managing a database of 1909 (+7%) records and moderating a Facebook group which had 709 (+42%) followers at the end of 2018. ICOS also issued 2 alumni newsletters in July and December 2018.

ICOS provided administrative and welfare support for all new and continuing Irish Aid fellows and continues to receive very high satisfaction ratings (97%) for its services from fellows.

Summary:

Services provided by ICOS to Irish Aid Fellowship Programmes:

- Financial and administrative services
- Coordination of placement of fellows on academic programmes
- Pre-and post-arrival information, orientation and briefings to fellows
- Travel and logistics service
- Immigration assistance and advice
- Accommodation queries and assistance
- Social and cultural events
- On-going support, advice, information and trouble-shooting
- Tracking studies of fellows post-completion of studies
- Production of tailored directories of eligible courses and supporting application materials for each fellowship pathway
- Public information and communications through dedicated website and case studies
- Support for the development of local alumni networks for the fellowship programme



Outcomes

An analysis of results achieved by completing fellows carried out in 2018 highlights the success of the fellowship programme and underlines the fact that Irish Aid is funding worthy candidates in a position to contribute significantly to capacity building upon their return home. 100% of fellows who completed in 2018 received honours grades in their final awards with 40% achieving 1st class honours. ICOS completed three tracking studies of former fellows in 2018 with encouraging results regarding reported rates of either promotion on return or the assignment of additional responsibilities.

New Palestinian Fellowship Programme in 2018

Lujain Subhi pictured here is studying for an MA in Peace and Development Studies at UL and is one of the seven personal profiles provided to Irish Aid by ICOS for 2018.

Lujain is the one of the three first recipients of the Palestinian Fellowship Programme. This is a new award commenced by Irish Aid in 2018.

Previous profiles are available online at www.irishaidfellowships.ie and help to illustrate the role of the fellowship programme in the context of Ireland's overall aid effort.

4. Strengthen our Organisation

During the life-time of its current strategy (2017-2021) ICOS aims to re-brand and enhance the organisation's profile and build a sustainable and well-run membership organisation that is responsive to change.

Key elements of a stronger organisation are:

Governance

Strengthening ICOS' Board and following best practice in terms of governance of the organisation remains a priority for ICOS. Three new members were elected to the ICOS Board at the AGM in 2018 while Ben Finnegan (MIC) continued to Chair the organisation. Sally-Anne McIver (Griffith College) and Audrey Byrne (DCU) continued in their roles as Vice-Chairperson and Company Secretary respectively while Sheila Mahon (NCI) took up the role of Treasurer.

ICOS was granted Charitable Status by the Charities Regulator in February 2018 after a protracted application process. This is an important public stamp of approval which underpins ICOS' credibility as an organisation as well as opening up opportunities for some discounted services which are only available to recognised charities.

Communications

In 2018, ICOS completed development work and launched a new website which greatly enhances its ability to communicate to its key audiences as well as generally raising ICOS' profile. The website contains a new section, "Know your Rights" designed to raise students' awareness regarding their rights in an accessible way. The website is also designed to offer enhanced features for members such as a forum area where members can answer each other's

questions and share information in a safe space. The new website attracted nearly 40,000 unique page views since its launch in June 2018.



969 followers
(+ 25%)



5,779
(+ 24%)

ICOS provided regular news updates to its members and supporters through ICOS' Facebook page. The number of page 'likes' continued to grow markedly throughout the year to 5779 (+ 24%) at the end of 2018. ICOS also had 969 (+25%) twitter followers at the end of the year and posted 187 tweets over the year.

Membership

ICOS had 32 (= 2016) members at the end of 2018. One new member, Pulse College was admitted at the AGM in June but later decided not to renew its membership.

Staffing

Internally, ICOS enjoyed a stable staffing situation. The only adjustment required was the arrangement of cover for the Programme & Training Manager who was out on maternity leave from November. A seamless transition was possible with the temporary promotion of the current Programme and Communications Officer to take on extra programme management responsibilities while the Director assumed training responsibilities. Meanwhile a former ICOS staff member was employed on a part-time, temporary basis to provide administrative support.

National and International Networking

ICOS keeps up to date and maintains its international profile through membership of UKCISA, the UK Council for International Student Affairs and the EAIE, the European Association for International Education. At national level, ICOS is involved in a number of networking forums including the Immigrant Information Network which regularly meets with officials in the GNIB and INIS. ICOS is also a member of Dóchas and the Wheel.

Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

ICOS is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, which provides a framework for organisations to refer to when designing and implementing their public communications strategy.

Balance Budget

In 2018, ICOS had income of €2,864,188 and expended €2,854,653 on the delivery of services resulting in a surplus of €9,535 which was significantly above our planned breakeven budget. This was due to the DES income of €10,000 which had not been approved when we were preparing the budget. Our unrestricted income of €311,128 shows a continuing high reliance on our Irish Aid contact fee (81%) to support our operations. Direct programme costs (restricted to fellowship funding) accounted for 89% of our turnover in 2018.

ICOS Council: Main Institutional Representatives and Individual Members: December 2018

Name of Representative	Position	Institution
Ms Mary Simpson	Director of International Relations	Athlone Institute of Technology
Mr Robert Griffiths	Head of EFL	Ballsbridge College of Further Education
Dr Stephen Robinson	Champlain College Onsite Director	Champlain College Dublin
Mr Neil Gallagher	President	College of Computing Technology
Ms Carmel Jordan*	International Officer	Cork Institute of Technology
Mr Shane Mooney*	Head of Student Experience	Dublin Business School
Ms Audrey Byrne*	International Mobilities Officer	Dublin City University
Mr Arnaud Teyssou*	International Recruitment Manager	Dublin Institute of Technology
Ms Denise McMorrow	Student Experience Manager	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Mr Karl Dowling	Resident Director, Ireland	Foundation for International Education
Mr John Joe O'Farrell	Director of International Engagement	Galway-Mayo IT
Ms Sally-Anne McIver*	International Office Manager	Griffith College Dublin
Mr Vincent Barry	Director	ICD Business School
Ms Megan Markey	Centre Director	IES Abroad
Ms Maria Keane	Resident Director	Institute of Study Abroad - Butler
Mr Francis Kelly*	Director	International School of Business
Ms Mairead Murphy	Marketing & Development Manager	IT Blanchardstown
Mr Eoin O'Brien	International Co-ordinator	IT Carlow
Ms Stella Browne	International Office	IT Tallaght
Mr Eddie Scully	International Manager	IT Tralee
Ms Cliona Campbell*	International Manager	Limerick Institute of Technology
Ms Claire Doran*	Director of Internationalisation	Maynooth University
Mr Ben Finnegan*	International Officer	MIC Limerick (to September 2018)
Ms Holly Cowman	Director of the International Office	MIC Limerick (from September 2018)
Ms Sheila Mahon*	International Officer	National College of Ireland
Ms Louise Kelly *	International Student Officer	NUI Galway
Ms Corriena Brien	Student Services Manager	Royal College of Surgeons
Ms Louise Staunton*	International Student Experience & Global Office Manager	Trinity College Dublin
Ms Aisling Cusack*	Vice President for Equality and Citizenship	Union of Students in Ireland
Ms Suzanne Buckley	International Student Support Officer	University College Cork
Mr Colin Tannam	International Student Support Officer	University College Dublin
Ms Josephine Page	Director, International Education Division	University of Limerick
Ms Sinead Day	International Affairs Manager	Waterford Institute of Technology

Individual Honorary Members

Ms Alice Grattan Esmonde Professor Brian McMurry

*Denotes Board Member

