



Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland



# Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report:

## RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences



## 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 RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences' 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 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 RCSI 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 for this provider. The Panel also concurs with RCSI's assessment that full compliance has been demonstrated across all 17 applicable criteria.

The Panel reached this conclusion by examining the evidence submitted by RCSI, which included the following:

The Panel reviewed documentation which demonstrated RCSI's engagement with prospective international learners, fulfilling 5.1.1 (a) by using multiple modes to understand their information needs. The Marketing and Student Recruitment teams consult external stakeholders, monitor global trends, and analyse formal survey feedback from both offer acceptors and decliners to inform recruitment strategies.

In compliance with 5.1.1 (b), RCSI provides clear, accurate, and accessible information via its website, emails, *Student Life* social media, open days, school visits, webinars, and market-specific International Prospectuses. Materials are developed in-house, reviewed annually, and refined using feedback from events and applicant communications.

The Panel reviewed the communication of information regarding professional accreditations and placement opportunities and found it to be clear and accessible, thereby meeting criteria 5.1.1 (c) and (d). Accreditation details and placement structures are prominently featured on programme

webpages and in prospectuses, with any exceptions transparently noted.

The Panel concluded that RCSI is compliant with Section 67 of the QQI Act 2012 and criterion 5.1.1 (e). Programme webpages clearly present award titles, awarding bodies, and qualification levels. Policies on application and transfer are publicly accessible, and the University's Recognition of Prior Learning and admissions criteria are aligned with QQI's principles for access, transfer, and progression. The University is exempt from the statutory Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL) scheme.

To meet criteria 5.1.1 (f)–(i) and 5.1.2 (a)–(b), the Panel concluded that RCSI provides comprehensive pre-enrolment information, particularly for undergraduate applicants. Programme webpages clearly outline key details such as start dates, fees, insurance, accommodation, and contact information. The 'Undergraduate Essentials' section offers further guidance on visa requirements, cost of living, and includes accessible contact details (address, email, and telephone). The Panel also noted that offer holders are granted access to a secure site containing handbooks and presentations. For postgraduate applicants, detailed programme information and personalised communications are provided; however, the experience could be further enhanced for post-graduate students enrolling on in-person programmes by including an easily navigable link in the post-graduate area to the practical information provided for international learners.

RCSI's engagement with agents is fully compliant with 5.1.2 (c)–(h) and aligns with the principles of the London Statement. For undergraduate programmes in Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, and Advanced Therapeutic Technologies, primarily outside the EU, RCSI works with trained agents under formal written agreements. These agreements include termination clauses and require thorough due diligence, including references and supporting documentation. Agents receive annual training and updated marketing materials, which must be approved by the University prior to use. Their performance is reviewed annually through student questionnaires and representative evaluations. Recruitment for Medicine, Dentistry, and all postgraduate programmes are managed directly by RCSI's Dublin-based teams.

The above clearly demonstrates RCSI's compliance with the 17 applicable criteria for Principle 5.1: Marketing and Recruitment. The Panel issues one non-timebound recommendation for RCSI:

#### **Recommendation 1**

**5.1.1:** The Panel recommends that RCSI consider including an easily navigable link in the post-graduate area on their website to the practical information provided for international learners enrolling on residential programmes (non-timebound).

## 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 RCSI that all seven criteria are applicable to Principle 5.2: Admissions and Qualifications Recognition. The Panel also concurs with RCSI's assessment that full compliance has been demonstrated across all seven applicable criteria. The Panel reached this conclusion by examining the evidence submitted by RCSI, as covered below.

RCSI is fully compliant with 5.2 (a)–(d), as evidenced by its robust admissions framework and English language proficiency requirements, adopting the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC).

Minimum academic entry standards are clearly defined and aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), with recognition of international qualifications supported by engagement with NARIC and overseas regulatory bodies. The RCSI Awards & Qualifications Committee ensures entry requirements are transparent, consistently applied, and regularly reviewed. Requirements for international applicants are tailored to reflect global secondary-level qualifications and grading

systems and are presented clearly on programme webpages.

For example, the Panel reviewed the undergraduate Medicine programme webpage, which outlines a five- or six-year pathway depending on the applicant's educational background. Entry requirements are clearly detailed for a wide range of regions, including Australia, Canada, the USA, India, Hong Kong, South Africa, and countries across the Middle East. The webpage also highlights the diversity of the student body, noting that over 60 nationalities are represented at RCSI Dublin [5.2 (a)–(d)].

The Panel reviewed RCSI's English Language Policy Statement, which governs English language proficiency and aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The University typically requires an IELTS score of 6.5, with no individual band (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) below 6.0, and certificates must be no older than two years. TOEFL equivalents are accepted, and Duolingo English Test scores are recognised for select programmes, such as the MSc in Leadership & Innovation in Healthcare, although Duolingo is not consistently listed across programme webpages. RCSI may wish to consider standardising the inclusion of Duolingo to enhance clarity and consistency in admissions information, but the Panel concluded that this does not impact its compliance with 5.2 (b).

The Panel also noted that postgraduate applicants are generally expected to hold a relevant Level 8 degree or apply via the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process, which considers professional experience. The RPL process is managed by the Admissions Office and Registry in collaboration with relevant schools, with clear guidance available on programme webpages [5.2 (d)].

RCSI complies with 5.2 (e) and (f) by providing evidence of timely written responses to applicants, including clear communication when applications are unsuccessful, particularly where qualifications are not recognised. International undergraduate applicants who do not meet entry requirements are signposted to pre-university pathways, as seen on the Medicine and Dentistry programme pages.

Finally, the Panel noted RCSI's documented commitment to keeping QQI informed of any issues related to qualification recognition in other regions. This supports compliance with criterion 5.2 (g) and helps ensure that admissions policies continue to facilitate the successful participation of international learners.

The above clearly demonstrates RCSI's compliance with the 7 applicable criteria for Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition.

**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 organisation 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 RCSI that all 11 criteria under Principle 5.3: Fees, Refunds, and Subsistence are applicable. It concurs with RCSI's assessment of full compliance across 11 criteria.. These judgements are based on a thorough review of the evidence submitted by RCSI.

RCSI demonstrates compliance with 5.3.1 (a) by providing clear and accessible information on undergraduate and postgraduate tuition fees for the full duration of each programme via individual programme webpages. Undergraduate pages also detail additional charges such as student contributions, IT fees, health screening, and NUI fees.

In line with 5.3.1 (b), the Panel reviewed offer letters which refer applicants to the website for fee details and outline payment schedules, methods, and sanctions for late payment. Students paying in

instalments receive invoices at least four weeks before each due date, while continuing students are invoiced after completing the previous academic year. Invoices include all relevant fee details, and sanctions for non-payment (such as restrictions on assessments and progression) are outlined in the Student Agreement. Debt management is overseen by the Finance Department.

RCSI complies with 5.3.1 (c) but could enhance its compliance with 5.3.1 (d). Its fee structure reflects programme delivery costs and supports its not-for-profit mission, with surpluses reinvested into education and research. Tuition fees are informed by a rolling five-year budget and annual planning process. Programme-specific charges, such as the one-off equipment fee for Dentistry (starting September 2025), are clearly outlined. Re-sit and appeal fees are listed in the examination portal. Non-EU undergraduate fees include non-tuition costs (e.g., laptops, club membership, GP services), with minor costs communicated pre-arrival. However, equivalent non-tuition fee information is not currently available for postgraduate students [5.3.1 (d)].

Compliance with 5.3.1 (e) and (f) is demonstrated through the provision of formal receipts and account statements via email, phone, in person, or the VLE. The panel noted that the refund policy is clearly outlined on the Finance FAQs webpage, covering full and partial refund scenarios.

RCSI complies with 5.3.1 (g) by offering financial assistance through dedicated funds, including the Student Assistance Fund (for EU students), the Student Hardship Fund (for non-EU students), and the Fund for Students with Disabilities. Student Welfare provides support to those experiencing financial difficulties, and students facing more substantial challenges may be referred to the Debtors Committee for case-by-case consideration of long-term solutions. These supports are clearly outlined in the Undergraduate Essentials section of the Student Life webpage.

RCSI complies with 5.3.2 (b)–(d) by providing cost-of-living and accommodation fee information via its website. Details about the University's student residence, including weekly charges, are available in the Undergraduate Essentials section and the RCSeYE closed website for offer holders. Costs for third-party accommodation providers are also included, and a dedicated accommodation manager is available to support students.

Based on the above, RCSI 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 RCSI and concurs with RCSI's self-assessment of full compliance across all criteria, with one commendation linked to 5.4.1 (a) and (b). These judgements are based on a comprehensive review of the submitted evidence, which demonstrates a student-centred approach to supporting international learners.

The Panel concluded that RCSI fosters a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes learner wellbeing and integration, ensuring a positive academic experience. This commitment begins pre-arrival and continues throughout the student journey. Pre-arrival support includes access to the RCSeve offer holders' website, the Offer Holders' Handbook, and practical webinars on accommodation, banking, and transport, ensuring students are well-prepared for university life. This demonstrates compliance with 5.4.1 (a) and (b).

The Panel noted that induction and orientation programmes are tailored to each cohort and delivered collaboratively by Student Services and Admissions. Undergraduate students receive structured inductions, while postgraduate research students have access to online and in-person events. Bespoke inductions are provided for non-standard start dates. These programmes introduce students to key services including the Library, IT, financial support, academic policies, CoMPPAS, and the Students' Union. Wellbeing is supported through confidential guidance provided by the Student Welfare Service, as well as financial assistance available through various funds and the Debtors Committee. This demonstrates compliance with 5.4.1 ((c)–(d), (g)) and 5.4.2 (a)–(e).

## 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 agrees with RCSI that three of the four criteria are applicable to Principle 5.5: English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes, confirming that criterion 5.5 (d) is not applicable to the provider. The Panel concurs with RCSI's self-assessment of full compliance across all three applicable criteria but could strengthen its compliance in 5.5 (a), where one timebound and one non-timebound recommendations are issued. These judgements are based on a comprehensive review of the submitted evidence.

With reference to 5.5 (a), the Panel notes that RCSI provides a comprehensive English Language Policy Statement (ELPS) and associated procedures that clearly define minimum English language proficiency requirements for all award programmes. These include recognized international tests, with specific IELTS scores and band requirements. The current ELPS, dated December 2024, has been formally endorsed by the RCSI Academic Council.

English language requirements are published online and are easily accessible, particularly for

applicants whose first language is not English. RCSI has established a governance model to oversee and assure the quality of its English language entry requirements, ensuring consistency across all programmes and delivery modes [5.5 (a)].

The ELPS reflects RCSI's commitment to continuous English language support throughout the student journey. For postgraduate students, pre-sessional support is provided through initiatives such as the Online Academic Readiness Programme, which focuses on academic and scientific writing. For undergraduate students, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is embedded early in the curriculum. For example, *Professionalism in Health Science* is a compulsory, year-long 10 ECTS module that integrates English academic literacies [5.5 (a)].

The ELPS affirms that where a need for EAP development is identified, programmes incorporate targeted support through a holistic, embedded approach grounded in an academic literacy framework. While the ELPS references credit-bearing modules, the Panel noted that it does not clearly specify whether all in-sessional EAP modules carry academic credit. The Panel therefore recommends that RCSI should clarify in the ELPS whether in-sessional EAP modules are credit-bearing, within 12 weeks of receiving TrustEd Ireland authorization. [5.5 (a)].

Learners benefit from ongoing development of language and communication skills through the Language Learning Lab, which offers self-study tools such as model pronunciation recordings and self-assessment features to enhance their speaking and listening skills. The Panel recommends that RCSI consider enhancing in-sessional English language provision by developing additional in-person or live online support sessions to support the academic progression of international learners (non-timebound). Overall, RCSI is compliant with 5.5 (a); however, this compliance could be further strengthened through the implementation of the two recommendations outlined above [5.5 (a)].

With reference to 5.5 (b) and (c), RCSI also delivers two Foundation Programmes in partnership with Munster Technological University (MTU) and Castel Education. While RCSI retains principal responsibility, specific roles are delegated through clear Service Level Agreements (SLAs), ensuring accountability and quality. Information on these programmes is transparently presented online, with accessible links detailing IELTS requirements based on students' intended degree destinations. The Foundation Programme Course Handbook, provided at registration and induction, outlines course details and clearly states that progression to a degree programme is contingent upon meeting specific IELTS (Academic) requirements.

Governance structures for the Foundation Programmes include joint academic workshops, an English Language Working Group, and Programme Executive Committees, all of which ensure consistent academic standards. RCSI demonstrates compliance with 5.5 (b) and (c).

Based on the above evidence, the Panel concludes that RCSI demonstrates full compliance with the three applicable criteria under Principle 5.5: English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes. However, compliance with 5.5 (a) could be further strengthened through the implementation of two recommendations:

**Recommendation 2**

**5.5 (a):** The Panel recommends that RCSI should clarify in the ELPS whether in-sessional EAP modules are credit-bearing, within 12 weeks of receiving TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

**Recommendation 3**

**5.5 (a):** The Panel recommends that RCSI consider enhancing in-sessional English language provision by developing additional in-person or live online support sessions to support the academic progression of international learners (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 RCSI that six of the eight criteria are applicable to 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 RCSI's self-assessment of full compliance across all six applicable criteria, with one commendation noted below.

With reference to 5.6.1 (a)-(c) and 5.6.2 (a)-(c), the Panel noted that RCSI delivers both offshore and online programmes, with plans to expand its online portfolio. Quality assurance and enhancement across its global partnerships, including those in China, Bahrain, and Malaysia, is overseen by the University's Quality Committee [5.6.1 (a) and 5.6.2 (a)].

All new programmes delivered overseas undergo the same rigorous quality assurance processes as those delivered in Dublin and are subject to oversight by QQI and the relevant in-country authority. For example, RCSI's Joint Education Institute with Soochow University (SU) in China is supervised by the Chinese Ministry of Education. This demonstrates compliance with 5.6.1 (a) and 5.6.2 (a). In addition, with reference to these criteria, the Panel commends RCSI for the rigorous self-assessment undertaken by RCSI Bahrain against the Code of Practice in preparation for its TrustEd Ireland application, confirming full compliance with all relevant criteria. The detailed evidence provided, covering student information, student life, professional accreditation, and visa requirements, demonstrates a strong commitment to transparency, quality, and the student experience across international campuses. This is an example of good practice for other HE providers.

The Panel concluded that RCSI demonstrates compliance with 5.6.1 (b) and (c) and 5.6.2 (b) and (c), based on evidence showing that transnational programmes consistently provide prospective applicants with information equivalent to that offered for Dublin-based studies. For example, RCSI Bahrain, established over 20 years ago, maintains a dedicated website aligned with the main RCSI site, offering comprehensive details on programmes, entry requirements, professional accreditation, tuition fees, commencement dates, additional costs, support services, student life and safety, and local customs and laws. Regular market insight surveys inform updates to published information, ensuring clarity and relevance.

English language requirements are clearly published, and a robust English Language Policy applies to all NFQ-awarding programmes, regardless of location or mode of delivery. For instance, at the International College of Pharmaceutical Innovation (Suzhou), progression to Year 2 of undergraduate programmes requires students to meet enhanced criteria, typically an Academic IELTS score of 6.0 (with no band below 5.0 and a B in the speaking test), or IELTS 6.5 (with no band lower than 6.0). (5.6.1 (a) and (c) and 5.6.2 (a), (b) and (c)).

The Panel concluded that student support is comprehensive across both offshore and online settings, encompassing academic and pastoral services, as well as mental health support. Tailored induction and orientation programmes, delivered both in-person and online, prepare students for their learning journey, with a strong emphasis on engagement and experience. Online learners are actively supported through participation in student surveys and access to a dedicated online learning hub. Student life is further enriched through student ambassadors and digital links to essential programme information, including academic integrity. Additionally, RCSI utilises the Health Professions Education Centre (HPEC) to deliver workshops that ensure the quality and suitability of online education, adding further evidence of compliance with 5.6.1 (b) and 5.6.2 (b).

The above clearly demonstrates RCSI's compliance with the 15 applicable criteria for Principle 5.6: International Learners Outside the State, with the following commendations noted, which are examples of good practice for other HE providers:

#### **Commendation 1**

**5.6.1 (a) and (b):** The Panel commends RCSI for its exemplary strategic and integrated approach to supporting international learners, particularly in the areas of language development and cultural integration.

#### **Commendation 2**

**5.6.1 (a); 5.6.2 (a):** The Panel commends RCSI for their rigorous self-assessment of overseas campuses (particularly at RCSI Bahrain) against the HE Code of Practice in preparation for its TrustEd Ireland application, supported by a comprehensive body of evidence.

## 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**

Founded by Royal Charter in 1784, RCSI provides undergraduate and postgraduate education across the health sciences, with campuses in Dublin, Bahrain, and Malaysia. It is a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI), was granted independent degree-awarding powers in 2010, became a Designated Awarding Body in 2012, and achieved university status in 2019.

In the 2021–22 academic year, RCSI had a total student population of 4,647, with steadily increasing graduate numbers in recent years. Students were enrolled across seven schools in Dublin, with 50% domiciled in Ireland and 47% from outside the EU. That year, RCSI welcomed students from 97 nationalities.

At the RCSI Bahrain campus, approximately 1,500 students from 49 nationalities were enrolled in undergraduate programmes in 2021–22. In Malaysia, RCSI and University College Dublin (UCD) jointly operate the RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus (RUMC). Over 300 students were enrolled at RUMC during the 2021–22 academic year. In 2018, RUMC was granted Foreign University Branch Campus status by the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

RCSI has also expanded into China through a Joint Education Institute with Soochow University. The International College in Pharmaceutical Innovation (ICPI), a collaboration between RCSI’s School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences and Soochow University’s College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, welcomed its first cohort in September 2024 at the Future Campus in Wujiang. Three programmes are offered: BSc in Pharmacy, BSc in Advanced Therapeutic Technologies, and MSc by Research. These programmes are delivered entirely in China, with teaching shared equally between RCSI and Soochow University staff.

Additionally, RCSI collaborates with other Irish institutions to attract international students to Ireland. For example, it jointly delivers the International Medical and Pharmacy Commencement Programmes with Munster Technological University.

RCSI fully complies with each of the six principles outlined in the Higher Education Code (5.1–5.6), as previously detailed. The University has established robust systems to ensure that all learners, across both its Dublin campus, transnational and online settings, receive an equivalent educational experience. This includes access to clear, transparent, and easily navigable information and support throughout their academic journey.

**Recommended condition(s) for authorisation**

N/A

**Commendations**

**Commendation 1**

**5.6.1 (a) and (b):** The Panel commends RCSI for its exemplary strategic and integrated approach to supporting international learners, particularly in the areas of language development and cultural integration.

**Commendation 2**

**5.6.1 (a); 5.6.2 (a):** The Panel commends RCSI for their rigorous self-assessment of overseas campuses (particularly at RCSI Bahrain) against the HE Code of Practice in preparation for its TrustEd Ireland application supported by a comprehensive body of evidence.

**Recommendations****Recommendation 1**

**5.1.1:** The Panel recommends that RCSI consider including an easily navigable link in the post graduate area on their website to the practical information provided for international learners enrolling on residential programmes (non- timebound).

**Recommendation 2**

**5.5 (a):** The Panel recommends that RCSI should clarify in the ELPS whether in-sessional EAP modules are credit-bearing, within 12 weeks of receiving TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

**Recommendation 3**

**5.5 (a):** The Panel recommends that RCSI consider enhancing in-sessional English language provision by developing additional in- person or live online support sessions to support the academic progression of international learners (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:



## **RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences Response**

RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences is proud to have achieved full compliance with all six principles of the Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners. This achievement reflects our enduring commitment to excellence in international education and is evident in the comprehensive support we provide to all international students, whether travelling to Ireland for their education or studying at our overseas campuses. We are sincerely grateful to the TrustEd panel for the time and consideration they dedicated to our application.

RCSI is an innovative, world-leading international university, encompassing undergraduate and postgraduate schools and faculties across the health sciences spectrum. We are home to leading research centres and healthcare institutes that drive pioneering breakthroughs in human health. In the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, RCSI is currently the joint top Irish Higher Education Institution for “International Outlook” and is ranked number one globally for the UN Sustainable Development Goal “Good Health and Well-being” in the THE University Impact Rankings.

As one of the world’s truly global education institutions, RCSI internationalises on many levels, including through branch campuses, international students and faculty, mobility initiatives and international collaborations. We have built significant international education and research links, particularly in Europe, North America and the Middle East.

Our commitment to international education has spanned decades. At a time when Ireland’s population was highly homogenous, RCSI was attracting international students to Dublin. One of the earliest groups of international students came from South Africa, seeking education opportunities unavailable at home during the apartheid era.

RCSI has a diverse and vibrant student body. This is reflected in our alumni numbering over 35,000 graduates improving human health in 108 countries. Our support services have been designed to fully integrate the academic and pastoral support needs of international students as core to our service provision. The 2024 QQI CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI commended “the range and accessibility of support provided for students across programmes and locations.” We are equally proud that the TrustEd panel found that RCSI “fosters a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes learner wellbeing and integration, ensuring a positive academic experience. This commitment begins pre-arrival and continues throughout the student journey.”

**Professor Cathal Kelly**

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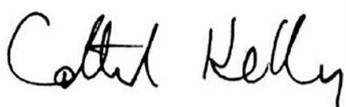
[www.rcsi.com](http://www.rcsi.com)

Our international outlook is evident in our global campus footprint. In Bahrain, where we have educated students for decades, RCSI opened our own campus in 2004. Today, RCSI Bahrain hosts over 1,600 students across three Schools. In Malaysia, RCSI and University College Dublin jointly operate RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus (RUMC), which achieved Foreign University Branch Campus status in 2018. Most recently, we established a Joint Education Institute with Soochow University in China, the International College of Pharmaceutical Innovation.

Our overseas campuses deliver programmes of the highest calibre, with programmes accredited by the Irish Medical Council, the Malaysian Medical Council, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, and by the Kingdom of Bahrain Education and Training Quality Authority, and Higher Education Council.

As a largely self-funded institution competing globally, maintaining the highest standards of quality for international students and transnational education is a strategic priority. RCSI's Quality Framework explicitly commits to ensuring that students at our international campuses receive an educational experience equivalent to that of students in Dublin. We therefore welcome the panel's finding that RCSI "has established robust systems to ensure that all learners, across both its Dublin campus, transnational and online settings, receive an equivalent educational experience. This includes access to clear, transparent, and easily navigable information and support throughout their academic journey."

RCSI remains deeply committed to continuous quality enhancement in international education. Receiving the International Education Mark with no conditions is both a validation of our efforts and a catalyst for future ambition. This recognition strengthens our resolve to innovate, expand, and lead in delivering world-class education and research. We will continue to invest in global partnerships, enhance student support services, and uphold the highest standards of academic excellence across all campuses. In doing so we will empower the next generation of healthcare professionals and researchers to improve human health worldwide, while fostering an inclusive, diverse, and globally connected learning community.



Professor Cathal Kelly

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