Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report:

Royal Irish Academy of Music

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 Royal Irish Academy of Music's 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
Dr Claire Carney	Chairperson	International Higher Education Consultant, United Kingdom.
Prof. Graham Butler	Report writer/Secretary	Full Professor of Law, Linnaeus University, Sweden.
Aisling Reast	International Education Expert	RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ireland
Kurdo Araz	Learner	RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences, 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)

Principle 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 be 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 Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) recruits international learners in a transparent and ethical manner, ensuring marketing and promotional materials provide clear, accurate, accessible, relevant, and up-to-date information.

The RIAM benefits from its small student population with regular one-to-one tuition and tutoring and as such has a proactive understanding of learner needs. It utilises annual student surveys, one-to-one meetings with Heads of Faculty, and orientation sessions to identify needs of enrolled international learners. The marketing team collaborates with the tertiary office and agents to gather queries from open days, website usage, and email exchanges, refining their understanding of prospective learners' needs.

Furthermore, RIAM demonstrates comprehensive and accessible information dissemination. The RIAM website provides clear, accurate, and up-to-date information via sections for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, handbooks, policies, fees, and student life. Requirements for information provision are met through detailed offer letters and pre-arrival information documents. Accurate representation is consistently maintained across all marketing materials, including open day presentations, and the mini-prospectus.

RIAM also exhibits engagement and monitoring of its recruitment agents. The institution has formal

written agreements with two recruitment agents, incorporating London Statement principles and including termination clauses for non-compliance. Due diligence is conducted, with references sought and existing clients contacted. Agents receive accurate and up-to-date information annually. A transparent monitoring process, including quarterly meetings and follow-ups with agent-referred students via online surveys, informs renewal decisions.

Condition 1

5.1.1 (e): Despite this compliance, there is an identified specific area for improvement, resulting in a recommended **condition** of authorisation, given section 5.1.1 (e), in that for the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level visibility, while NFQ levels are present on main programme pages, it is a requirement that they are visible on *all* programme pages, including those for specific specialisms like BMus Composition.

It is accepted that RIAM's small institutional size and individualised class structure facilitate a deep understanding of its prospective student body. However, if RIAM plans for future international growth, more formalised processes will be necessary to ensure systems remain robust and comprehensive as student numbers increase. This implies that while the current, more personal approach is effective for existing student numbers, scaling up would require a more structured systemic framework to maintain the current high standards of compliance and student support.

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

Entry requirements for international learners to RIAM are specified and accessible on its online application portal, complemented by 'how-to' guidance. The institution aligns its minimum matriculation requirements for international school examinations with those of Trinity College Dublin (TCD) as a linked provider, ensuring a consistent standard. An application procedure, including auditions and interviews, is in place to assess musical performance abilities, which is necessary for participation in its specialised performance programmes. Furthermore, the effectiveness of RIAM's communication is monitored through an annual review of applicant queries, leading to ongoing improvements in the application process. RIAM also benchmarks its application journey against other conservatoires and actively participates in professional bodies like the Council of Heads of Music in Higher Education (CHMHE) and the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC) to stay updated on entry requirements.

For non-native English speakers, RIAM's English language proficiency requirements are explicitly stated on its website and within its dedicated English language policy, providing clear benchmarks for applicants. In terms of qualification recognition, RIAM adheres to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), a commitment implemented through its recognition of prior learning and admission and transfer policies and procedures. The institution employs the 'substantial difference' principle when evaluating foreign qualifications and prior learning for non-standard admissions. Should substantial differences be identified, RIAM recommends additional study or assessment to ensure equivalency, promoting fairness and transparency in its admissions decisions. The tertiary office collaborates with faculty to ensure international qualifications are assessed fairly and consistently.

Transparency in communication extends to the outcomes of the admissions process. RIAM provides timely written responses to applicants who are refused admission, typically within one month of their audition, and offers detailed feedback upon request. If recognition of a qualification is withheld, clear reasons are provided to the applicant, along with potential pathways for future recognition and an established appeal mechanism. Additionally, RIAM supports QQI in its statutory function to facilitate the international recognition of Irish awards, including those within the home states of its international learners.

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 organization 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

RIAM communicates compulsory fees for the full duration of its programmes through multiple channels, including its website, the letter of offer sent to successful applicants, and the TCD (as a linked provider) student portal. This ensures that fees are transparent from the outset, distinguishing between programme fees, student levies and charges. The institution also states that there are no additional or unexpected fees beyond those initially communicated. RIAM's fee structure is regularly reviewed and benchmarked against international competitors in the UK and USA, aiming to maintain affordability while supporting the delivery of a high-quality education.

For fee collection and payment processes, RIAM students register and process payments through the TCD payment system. Information regarding payment methods, sanctions for late payment, and

debt collection procedures is readily available on the RIAM website. Upon payment, the intention is for students to receive a downloadable receipt from the TCD student portal that provides a clear breakdown of fees paid.

However, the evidence provided by RIAM did not support this, as no clear breakdown of fees is provided.

Condition 2

5.3.1. (e): Therefore, a specific recommended **condition** of TrustEd Ireland authorisation is set, where stronger documentation of the actual output of the process is required to fully confirm adherence to this specific criterion, with a clear breakdown an essential component of such a receipt (5.3.1 (e)).

RIAM maintains a transparent refund for students policy on its website, outlining conditions for full and partial refunds, including cases of refused entry visa applications.

In terms of financial supports and living costs, RIAM provides sufficient information. Details on scholarships and bursaries, such as the significant BVOF/RIAM Next Generation Awards for Master's students, are published on its website. Furthermore, the institution has established mechanisms like the student assistance fund/hardship fund to offer financial support to students facing unexpected difficulties. General advice on the average cost of living in Dublin, including estimates, are provided through a fact sheet on the website. While RIAM does not offer its own accommodation, it directs students to external accommodation providers and resources.

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

Before arrival, RIAM provides pre-arrival information to assist international learners in adjusting to their new surroundings. This includes practical details on accommodation, cost of living in Dublin, and visa requirements, disseminated through offer letters and pre-arrival handbooks. The institution's orientation week is planned to cater specifically to international students, offering a thorough introduction to RIAM life. These sessions cover essential topics such as intercultural awareness and responsibilities under applicable law. Given RIAM's small student cohort (150 students or so, with approximately 30-40 new international learners annually), the induction process is inherently personal and hands-on, which facilitates a high degree of interaction and integration into the learning culture. While intercultural awareness is addressed institutionally, it is less clear that it forms part of all learner inductions.

RIAM provides an array of learner supports throughout the academic year. A dedicated session

during orientation week details available resources, including student support leaders (trained staff and student volunteers acting as informal contacts), free and confidential counselling, and the active involvement of the RIAM Students' Union. Collaboration with Disability Office of TCD ensures that students with additional needs receive appropriate support. To further facilitate integration, RIAM organises social events, leverages access to TCD's extensive societies.

Student feedback is encouraged through annual surveys and a formal student complaints policy, ensuring an approach to service delivery. Financial mechanisms are also in place, with a number of scholarships and bursaries available, alongside a student assistance fund/hardship fund to support students facing unexpected financial difficulties.

Condition 3

5.4.2 (d): In terms of academic support (5.4.2.(d.)), while plagiarism is covered, there was no evidence of broader academic integrity training and awareness as part of induction and throughout the whole student journey (e.g., covering topics such as contract cheating and appropriate use of artificial intelligence). Whilst orientation sessions are provided, there is a need for more comprehensive training to address contemporary challenges. Therefore, a recommended **condition** of TrustEd Ireland authorisation is included in relation to broader academic integrity training.

Recommendation 1

5.4.1 (c): Consider including intercultural awareness in all learner inductions: although intercultural awareness is addressed at an institutional level and in the personalised induction for international students, it is less clear that it forms part of all learner inductions.

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

Section 5.5 (a) requires providers to have an English language policy statement that documents their approach to assessing English language proficiency entry requirements. RIAM asserts its compliance with this criterion, stating it has an English language policy available on its website. This policy is designed to clearly outline English language proficiency requirements for admission. The institution's commitment to supporting non-native English speakers extends to providing English language support throughout their higher education programme.

An example of this commitment is the offering of free English language and conversation classes to students. These classes, held for two hours every week, are open to all levels of English proficiency. They are structured around topics, encouraging conversation in groups, and providing support in areas such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking, with the teacher offering feedback and correcting common mistakes. This initiative aligns with the programme component noted in the criterion, demonstrating practical support for language development during studies. Furthermore, RIAM's internationalisation strategy identifies English language support to help

students transition smoothly into academic life as a key aspect of enhancing the student experience and engagement.

Condition 4

5.5 (a): While the institution has articulated its approach to English for academic purposes tuition, supporting evidence was not provided to fully substantiate these claims. This indicates that while the policy and the descriptive framework are in place, the panel were of the view that there is a need for more concrete, documented evidence to demonstrate the consistent implementation and effectiveness of the stated English language support programmes for evaluative purposes. There is also a need to review the English language entry requirements to ensure they are consistent and that they meet the RIAM's requirements. The accompanying **condition** of TrustEd Ireland authorisation sets points towards enhancing the documentation and tracking of these vital services to ensure verifiable adherence to the criterion (5.5 (a)).

Recommendation 2

5.5 (a): Consideration ought to be given to focused in-sessional English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study.

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

RIAM's stance of non-applicability is stated in its self-assessment submission. It explicitly states that it does not run transnational programmes and offers no fully online education to any students.

While it is therefore not applicable to current operations, it is important to contextualise this within the institution's broader internationalisation strategy. RIAM's internationalisation strategy aims to elevate its global standing, attract more international students, and expand partnerships. Strategic priorities include identifying priority markets, developing formal partnerships, enhancing alumni networks, and recruiting 25% of its students internationally. However, these strategic objectives are currently focused on attracting international students to study *in Ireland* on 'in-person'-based programmes.

Therefore, whilst RIAM does not currently engage in transnational education or offer fully online programmes to international learners outside the state, it can be agreed that, at this time, this is not applicable. However, should RIAM's strategic direction evolve to include transnational or fully online programmes for learners outside the state, it would then become subject to compliance requirements in this regard.

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
The RIAM is Ireland's national conservatoire for music, specialising in classical music. Its student population consists of 130 students, comprising 53 students from EU and non-EU enrolments. It is a linked provider of TCD and presents itself as a small, specialised institution with a strong focus on one-to-one teaching, which inherently supports its understanding of the bespoke needs of its prospective student body. While RIAM's current size facilitates a personalised approach, future international growth will necessitate more formalised processes and systems to ensure continued robustness and comprehensiveness.

RIAM's Internationalisation Strategy (2022-2025) outlines ambitious goals to elevate its global standing, attract more international students, and expand partnerships. Objectives include aspiring to be among the top 5 music colleges globally, aiming for a higher number of international students. The strategy is underpinned by four strategic priorities: partnerships, identifying key international markets, student experience and engagement, and an alumni network. RIAM actively engages in international links and exchanges, participating in programmes like Erasmus+, holding membership in the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC), and conducting international performance projects with renowned institutions such as the Juilliard School and the Paris Conservatoire.

RIAM demonstrates compliance against criteria across the HE code. International recruitment is transparent and ethical, with accurate, accessible promotional materials and close collaboration between marketing, faculty, and agents. While NFQ levels are generally visible, a minor oversight on specialised programme pages indicates partial compliance requiring correction. Admissions processes are robust, clearly communicated, and aligned with TCD, including detailed English language and recognition policies. Rejected applicants receive timely decisions and feedback, supported by an appeals process.

Fees are communicated via multiple platforms, with no hidden costs and an accessible refund policy. However, evidence confirming the provision of detailed downloadable receipts through TCD's portal was insufficient, resulting in only partial compliance with criterion 5.3.1(e). RIAM provides financial support through scholarships, bursaries, and a hardship fund, and guides students on external accommodation options.

International learners benefit from personalised pre-arrival and orientation programmes tailored to RIAM's small cohort size. Ongoing academic and personal support is well-established, including counselling, peer mentors, and access to TCD services. While academic integrity is addressed in part, broader training on contract cheating and on emerging risks like AI are lacking, rendering criterion 5.4.2.(d.) partially compliant.

Overall, RIAM has a comprehensive approach to most areas assessed and as such most criteria within the HE Code principles for international learners are assessed as fully compliant, indicating a consistent approach to international provision.

Recommended condition(s) for authorisation:

Condition 1

5.1.1 (e): National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level visibility. While NFQ levels are present on main programme pages, they need to be visible on all programme pages, including those for specific specialisms. In order to achieve full compliance with 5.1.1 (e), RIAM must act within twelve weeks following TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Condition 2
5.3.1 (e): A clear breakdown of fees in receipts: RIAM's outlined process for providing downloadable receipts. However, it omitted a clear breakdown of fees. In order to achieve full compliance with 5.3.1 (e), RIAM must act within twelve weeks following TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Condition 3
5.4.2 (d): Broader academic integrity training: While plagiarism is a core topic in learner induction, there was no evidence of broader academic integrity training covering topics like contract cheating and appropriate use of generative AI. This ought to be acted upon within one year following TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Condition 4
5.5 (a): RIAM must describe in further detail the range of English language supports offered to international learners and review the English language entry requirements. In order to achieve full compliance with 5.5 (a), RIAM must act within twelve weeks following TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

These conditions underscore the need for RIAM to enhance its documentation and formal processes, particularly if it pursues its long-term goals of increased internationalisation, to ensure that its robust, albeit currently personalised, support systems remain effective and verifiable as student numbers potentially increase.

Commendations:

N/A

Recommendations:

There are three recommendations for where formalised processes, enhanced documentation, or broader implementation are necessary to sustain quality and ensure comprehensiveness. These recommendations are presented in the anticipation that RIAM can effectively manage its internationalisation strategy and projected growth, whilst ensuring high standards of student support and operational transparency are scalable and verifiable in the long term:

Recommendation 1
5.4.1 (c): Consider including intercultural awareness in all learner inductions: although

intercultural awareness is addressed at an institutional level and in the personalised induction for international students, it is less clear that it forms part of all learner inductions.

Recommendation 2

5.5 (a): Consideration ought to be given to focused in-sessional English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study.

Recommendation 3

General: More broadly, it is recommended that RIAM review how they make all information more accessible and centrally located for international students. The panel recognised that whilst all information required is provided it is presented across a range of channels including, a factsheet, webpages, pre-arrival letter, handbooks and policies, it is recommended that all content is reviewed and presented in a student 'friendly' accessible manner and in one location.

Declaration of Assessment Panel

This report has been agreed by the Assessment Panel and is signed on their behalf by the Chairperson.

Assessment Panel Chairperson: Dr Claire Carney

Date: 8 October 2025

Signed: *Claire Carney*

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Royal Irish Academy of Music
Institutional Response to the TrustEd Ireland Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report
Date: 4th November 2025
Submitted to: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

1. Introduction

The Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) welcomes the findings of the TrustEd Ireland Assessment Report and values the constructive and collegial engagement of the Assessment Panel. We are pleased that the Panel has confirmed RIAM's authority to use the TrustEd Ireland Mark and has recognised the Academy's strong compliance with all six Higher Education Code principles.

We note with satisfaction the report's recognition of RIAM's transparent recruitment practices, robust admissions processes, comprehensive learner supports, and commitment to quality in our specialised music provision. The findings reflect RIAM's ongoing dedication to international best practice, learner welfare, and the delivery of an exceptional conservatoire education in partnership with Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

2. Response to Conditions of Authorisation

Condition 1 – NFQ Level Visibility (5.1.1 e)
RIAM acknowledges the requirement to ensure National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels are visible on *all* programme pages. The Academy has initiated a full review of all web and print programme materials, and all pages will display the relevant NFQ level, award title, and awarding body details.
Timeline: Completed within twelve weeks of authorisation.

Condition 2 – Fee Breakdown on Receipts (5.3.1 e)
RIAM accepts the condition regarding the provision of clear fee breakdowns in receipts issued through the TCD student portal. RIAM will document this process and include sample outputs as evidence of compliance.
Timeline: Completed within twelve weeks of authorisation.

Condition 3 – Academic Integrity Training (5.4.2 d)
RIAM agrees that a broader, contemporary approach to academic integrity training, addressing plagiarism, contract cheating, and the responsible use of generative AI, will enhance existing provision. A revised academic integrity framework is being developed in consultation with RIAM UG and PG Committees, TCD's ACDC and Quality Committee. The proposed module will be embedded in induction from September 2026, with refresher sessions delivered annually.
Timeline: Implemented within one year of authorisation.

Condition 4 – English Language Policy and Supports (5.5 a)
RIAM recognises the importance of documenting and evidencing its English language supports. The English Language Policy is being updated to include:

- Audit all programme pages, prospectuses, and admissions materials to confirm that English language entry requirements are consistently stated and match the approved policy.
- Ensure consistency across all digital and printed materials, including:

    o Undergraduate and postgraduate webpages
    o Application guidelines
    o International admissions factsheets

- o Agent information packs
- Establish a central repository for all current admissions information to avoid future discrepancies.
- Documentation of English Language Supports
  - o Catalogue and describe all current supports available to non-native English speakers, including:
  - o Weekly English language and conversation classes
  - o Writing and communication workshops

Timeline: Completed within twelve weeks of authorisation.

3. Response to Recommendations

(i) Intercultural Awareness in All Inductions (5.4.1 c)
RIAM will integrate intercultural awareness content into all learner inductions, ensuring both domestic and international students engage with inclusive practice and global citizenship themes.

(ii) In-Sessional English Language Supports (5.5 a)
In addition to existing weekly conversation classes, RIAM will introduce targeted workshops focused on discipline-specific academic communication.

(iii) Centralised Access to Information
RIAM will develop a unified online *International Student Hub* to consolidate policies, handbooks, cost-of-living guidance, and pre-arrival materials, enhancing accessibility and clarity.

- Structure the hub around the international learner journey
- Embed or link existing documents (policies, handbooks, forms) in easily downloadable, accessible formats.
- Ensure the hub is mobile-friendly and compliant with web accessibility standards
- Provide links to the hub in key correspondence, such as offer letters, visa support communications, and induction emails
- Introduce a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) section for quick reference.
- Include a prominent "Contact and Support" section linking students directly to RIAM's Tertiary Staff.

4. Continuous Enhancement and Forward Planning

RIAM welcomes the Panel's observation that our small size fosters a personalised and responsive environment. In line with our Internationalisation Strategy (2022-2025), RIAM is formalising processes to support projected international growth, ensuring scalability and quality assurance parity. The Board of Studies will monitor progress against each condition and recommendation, reporting quarterly to the Director and to QQI as appropriate.

RIAM remains fully committed to the principles of transparency, learner support, and continuous improvement that underpin the TrustEd Ireland framework. The Academy values this process as an important driver of enhancement and accountability within the Irish and international higher education landscape.

Signed:

Deborah Kelleher
Director, Royal Irish Academy of Music