



ICOS

Irish Council for International Students

Annual Report 2016



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FOREWORD

Suzanne Buckley, ICOS Chairperson

In 2016, ICOS engaged with members and stakeholders in important consultations regarding its new five year strategy for 2017-2021. International developments including the UK's decision to exit the EU loomed large with most believing that Brexit would have both positive and negative impacts on international education in this country. Domestically, while Ireland is emerging from recession, the austerity years have left their legacy with significant challenges remaining with regard to the funding of higher education generally as well as a national housing crisis which inevitably impacts on students with particular shortages of suitable, affordable student accommodation being experienced in our main urban centres notably, Dublin, Cork and Galway.

Against this backdrop, ICOS continued to actively represent the shared interests of its members and international students throughout the year. In 2016, we were active on five national forums including the High Level group on Internationalisation while our annual seminar addressed the very important question of supporting international students in times of crises.

ICOS continues to be very proud of its association with the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme and 2016 was another good year for the programme. The new Irish Aid Fellowships website was launched in February. ICOS project managed this initiative on behalf of Irish Aid and continues to maintain the website which now provides a very important one-stop-shop for those interested in the fellowship programme with information for candidates, current fellows and alumni as well as staff in higher education institutions.

Internally, ICOS rose to the challenge of replacing some long term staff who moved on during 2016. I take this opportunity to thank departing staff while welcoming the new team members who bring new energy to the organisation and have already proven their worth. Much thanks also to my colleagues on the ICOS Board who have contributed of their time and expertise to ensure that ICOS continues to focus on its mission to make Ireland a welcoming and safe place for international students.

Policy and Standards

Goal: To influence national and institutional policies so as to offer greater protection to international students and enhance their experience in Ireland

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

The major focus of ICOS' policy work during 2016 was commentary on the draft international education strategy for 2016-20. The strategy was published in October. ICOS also commented on, and offered advice to students in relation to the Interim List of Eligible Programmes known as the ILEP which was introduced in its completed form in January, 2016. This was a key measure in terms of the Government's moves to tighten regulation of the sector in order to protect students from rogue and sub-standard private providers and to offer safeguards to students in the event of college closures.

2016 also saw ICOS involved in on-going liaison with Government Departments and agencies in relation to the implementation of significant new operational changes to the student registration process with specific reference to the introduction of an on-line appointments system for Dublin area registrations. While the appointments system represented a welcome move away from the unacceptable queuing that had been a feature of the Burgh Quay process, there were many issues impacting negatively on the experience of international students not least the long waiting times for appointments and the knock on effects this had on students' freedom to travel outside Ireland and to work. ICOS arranged a special meeting with INIS to discuss this and other immigration issues in July 2016 ahead of student arrivals for the new academic year and discussions are on-going regarding some of the outstanding challenges in the system for students and their host institutions.

ICOS also represented members on relevant national forums concerned with student learning and student support services ensuring that the international student perspective was considered in all discussions. In 2016, ICOS was invited to contribute to a major study, entitled "The Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education" by way of membership of an Advisory Group convened by the HEA to support the study which it is funding. The study itself is being conducted by the Irish Research Council (IRC) and its results, the first of its kind in Ireland, will provide important information regarding the extent to which Irish HEIs are internationalised. The study is on-going and is scheduled for completion by late 2017.

In 2016, ICOS attended quarterly consumer forum meetings with INIS and the GNIB where ICOS members' questions on student immigration policy and service issues were addressed.

These meetings are coordinated by Crosscare under the umbrella of the Immigrant Information Network (IIN) of which ICOS is a member.



In 2016, ICOS was represented on and actively contributed to national forums:

- High Level Group on Internationalisation
- Immigrant Information Network (IIN)
- HEA/IRC Research Project Advisory Group on Study entitled “The Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education”
- QQI Consultative Forum
- ACELS/QQI Recognition Committee

Services to Members and Students

Goal: To strengthen the ability of our members to deliver appropriate and quality services to their international students while also providing independent information and advice directly to international students

Key Activities in 2016:

Training

ICOS' training output dropped in 2016 and this had been anticipated. The launch of ICOS' training publication, "Diverse Voices" in 2015 had increased demand for that year and this could not be maintained into 2016. Also ICOS' long serving Training Manager left the organisation in August 2016 and there was a gap of two months before her replacement was in place. Demand for ICOS training strengthened towards the end of the year and overall the results were satisfactory with the delivery of 20 courses in 6

ICOS member institutions. Courses delivered were mainly targeted at staff in HEIs but in response to member requests, ICOS also tailored and delivered intercultural awareness courses to students including to students travelling abroad on exchanges and volunteering programmes.

ICOS hosted a very successful seminar in June 2016 on the theme, "Supporting International Students in Times of Crisis: Where does the duty of care begin and end?" An experienced panel of speakers brought perspectives from Ireland and the US to an audience of HEI staff and sector interests and this was followed by a lively question and answer session. The seminar was held in the Dublin City Wall Space, Wood Quay and attended by over 60 people.



Dr. Stephen Robinson addressing ICOS' AGM & Seminar 2016 at Wood Quay Venue



Information

ICOS provided regular news updates to its members and supporters through ICOS' Facebook page.

The number of 'likes' continued to grow markedly throughout the year, from 3790 at the end of 2015 compared to 4671 at the end of 2016 (+ 23%). ICOS also had 504 twitter followers at the end of the year.



4671
page likes



504
followers

Advice

ICOS continued to provide a telephone and email advice service for international students, as well as staff in immigrant advice centres and higher education institutions. ICOS mediated in a significant number of individual cases involving students who were experiencing problems. After a period of uncertainty, ICOS was able to present clear advice online from the start of the year based on the full introduction of the ILEP listing of visa-eligible courses. The volume

of advice requests for the year was down compared to 2014 and 2015 when we saw the closure of a number of private colleges, but legacy queries continued to be received and ICOS' dedicated college closures website was maintained accordingly. The most common queries related to visa and immigration issues, while ICOS also responded to a wide variety of cases ranging from school disputes to studying in Ireland and employment opportunities.

Management of Irish Aid Fellowships

Goal: To work with Irish Aid and higher education institutions to develop the Fellowship Training Programme as an effective tool for capacity development in Ireland's partner countries and to contribute to a better understanding of the programme in Ireland.

Overview

ICOS is happy to report another successful year in respect of the management of the Irish Aid Fellowship Programme with the programme achieving all of its main targets in terms of quality of applications and number of fellows completing successfully. Key facts:

- ICOS processed 131 applications for Irish Aid Fellowships across its four different strands. Ultimately 74 fellows were offered awards in Irish higher education institutions and a further 33 candidates were offered awards in regional institutions. As part of its contract with Irish Aid, ICOS co-ordinated and supported the development of a dedicated website for the Irish Aid fellowship programme. This project was completed towards the end of 2015 and the website was officially launched by Irish Aid in February 2016 and is available at www.irishaidfellowships.ie. This website greatly enhances the visibility of the fellowship programme and facilitates the transfer of information to all major stakeholders.
- ICOS also supported the development of Irish Aid's fellowship alumni networks managing a database of 1434 (+ 8%) alumni records and moderating a Facebook group which had 351 (+23%) members at the end of 2016.
- ICOS provided administrative and welfare support for all new and continuing Irish Aid fellows and in addition provided specific fellowship management services to the Michael Smurfit Graduate School in UCD on the Vietnamese IDEAS Programme.



2015 Fellowship recipient Rhulani Lehloka from South Africa speaking at Irish Aid Headquarters in Limerick, 12th April 2016

Duth Kimsru (pictured right) from Cambodia, studying on the MA in International Development, Environment and Conflict at Dublin City University is featured among one of the seven personal profiles provided to Irish Aid by ICOS for 2016.

Previous profiles can be viewed online by visiting www.irishaidfellowships.ie and help to illustrate the role of the fellowship programme in the context of Ireland's overall aid effort.



Services provided by ICOS

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

Outcomes

An analysis of results achieved by completing fellows carried out in 2016 highlights the success of the programme and underlines the fact that Irish Aid is funding worthy candidates in a position to contribute significantly to capacity building upon their return home.

95% of fellows who completed in 2016 received honours grades in their final awards with 21% achieving 1st class honours. ICOS completed two tracking studies of former fellows in 2016 with encouraging results regarding reported rates of either promotion on return or the assignment of additional responsibilities.

Organisational Development

Goal: Strengthening ICOS' own ability to deliver

Communications

In 2016, ICOS continued to develop and update its own website which provides important information in a number of areas including on studying in Ireland for International students and on ICOS services for Members.

Major re-development work on ICOS' website which had been planned for 2016 was not completed due to staffing changes. The re-development work is now planned for 2017. ICOS' social media profile and activity grew steadily in 2016 as already indicated and this will continue to be a strong arm of our communications strategy into the future.

National and International Networking

ICOS keeps up to date and maintains its international profile through membership of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE). At national level, ICOS is involved in a number of networking forums including the Immigrant Information Network which regularly meets with officials in the GNIB and INIS. ICOS is a member of Dóchas and the Wheel and also liaises with immigrant support organisations such as the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI) and the Immigrant Council for Ireland (ICI).

Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

ICOS is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, which provides a framework which organisations can refer to when designing and implementing their public communication strategies. ICOS was represented at the annual Code review meeting held by Dóchas and new staff and volunteers were provided with information on the Code and a web-based feedback mechanism is provided for comment from members of the public.

Governance

Strengthening ICOS' Board and following best practice in terms of governance of the organisation remains a priority for ICOS.

Five new members were elected to the ICOS Board at the AGM in 2016 and ICOS also saw significant changes to its officer board during the year with Suzanne Buckley (UCC), Sally-Anne McIver (Griffith College) and Louise Kelly (NUIG) taking over as Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer respectively, replacing Stephen Robinson (Champlain College), Kevin Geoghegan (Griffith College) and Donal McAlister (IT Carlow). The Board met five times during 2016.

ICOS' application for Charitable Status remains active and ICOS had several communications during the year with the Charity Regulator in pursuit of its application. The process is slower than had been anticipated with a decision now expected in 2017.

Staffing

There were significant and unexpected staff changes in ICOS in 2016 with the loss of two long-serving staff, Louise Staunton (16 years) and Colin Tannam (12 years), which presented challenges.

Sinead Corcoran, another staff member, had left earlier in the year. However our recruitment campaign was very successful and we welcomed three very able and enthusiastic new team members - Emma Dwyer, Programme and Training Manager; Shannette Budhai, Programme and Communications Officer; and Derrie Murray, Programme Officer - and were in a very strong position by year end.

We thank Louise, Colin and Sinead for their excellent service to ICOS and wish them well in their new roles.



Shannette Budhai, Emma Dwyer & Derrie Murray

2016: A YEAR OF CHANGE

We welcomed new faces to the ICOS team...



Louise Staunton



Colin Tannam



Sinead Corcoran

...as we said goodbye to the previous dedicated team

We also took time to review our strategy and plan for the next 5 years:

ICOS' new strategy 2017-2021 development was an important part of our work in 2016. The process involved:

- Discussion at 2016 AGM
- Board discussions
- Staff discussions
- Member survey



Institutional Representatives and Individual Members

ICOS Council, December 2016

*ICOS Board member

Athlone Institute of Technology	Ms Mary Simpson	Manager, International Office
	Ms Jackie Cunnane	International Office Co-ordinator
Ballsbridge College of Further Education	Mr Robert Griffiths	Head of EFL
	Mr Laurence Cooke	Co-ordinator
Champlain College Dublin	Dr Stephen Robinson*	Director
	Ms Lilly Johnsson	Operations Manager
College of Computing Technology	Mr Neil Gallagher	College Director
	Ger O'Callaghan	Head of Admissions and Marketing
Cork Institute of Technology	Mr Mervyn O'Mahony	Communications and Marketing Officer
	Ms Carmel Jordan*	International Officer
Dublin Business School	Mr Shane Mooney	Head of Student Experience
Dublin City University	Mr Paul Smith	International Director
	Ms Audrey Byrne*	Senior International Officer
Dublin Institute of Technology	Mr Robert Flood	Head of International Affairs
	Mr Arnaud Teyssou*	International Student Experience Officer
Dun Laoghaire IADT	Mr David Doyle	Administration & Student Affairs Manager
	Mr Denise McMorrow	Student Experience Manager
Foundation for International Education	Mr Karl Dowling	Resident Director
Galway-Mayo IT	Dr John Kennedy	Head of International and External Affairs
	Mr Brian Doyle	Academic Co-Ordinator
Griffith College	Mr Kevin Geoghegan	Head of Department, International Office
	Ms Sally-Anne McIver*	Office Manager, International Office
IES Abroad	Ms Megan Markey	Centre Director
Institute for Study Abroad - Butler	Ms Maria Keane	Director of Programmes
International School of Business	Mr Francis Kelly	Director
IT Blanchardstown	Ms Fiona Canning	International Officer
	Ms Mairead Murphy	Marketing Manager
IT Carlow	Ms Rosemary Flynn	Head of Learner Support & Student Services
IT Sligo	Mr Patrick Lynch	International Affairs Manager
	Ms Eileen Gillen	International Officer
IT Tallaght	Ms Stella Browne	Administrative Officer

IT Tralee	Mr Eddie Scully	International Education Officer
Limerick Institute of Technology	Ms Cliona Campbell	International Manager
	Ms Niamh Kavanagh	International Officer
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	Ms Holly Cowman*	Director of International Officer
	Mr Ben Finnegan	International Relations Executive
Maynooth University	Ms Claire Doran	Interim Director of Internationalisation
	Ms Helen Kirrane	International Officer
National College of Ireland	Mr Richard Barry	Director - International Development
	Ms Sheila Mahon	International Officer
NUI Galway	Ms Anna Cunningham	Director, International Office
	Ms Louise Kelly*	International Student Officer
Royal College of Surgeons	Mr Philip Curtis	Assoc. Director, Admissions & Student Services
	Ms Corriena Brien	Student Services Manager
Trinity College Dublin	Ms Louise Staunton*	Global Office Coordinator
	Mr Colum Cronin	Global Room Manager
Union of Students in Ireland	Ms Síona Cahill	Vice President for Equality and Citizenship
University College Cork	Ms Suzanne Buckley*	International Student Support Officer
University College Dublin	Ms Shauna Hughes*	International Relations Manager
	Ms Carl Lusby	International Student Officer
University of Limerick	Ms Josephine Page	Director, International Education Division
	Ms Amanda Glennon	International Recruitment Manager
Waterford IT	Ms Sinéad Day	International Affairs Manager
	Ms Don O'Neill	International Placement Coordinator

Individual (Honorary) Members

Ms Alice Grattan Esmonde

Professor Brian McMurry

Summary of Accounts at 31 December 2016

Approved by the Board: 6 April 2017

Statement of Financial Activities

	Restricted Funds 2016	Unrestricted Funds 2016	Total 2016	Total 2015
Income and Endowments from:				
Charitable activities	1,942,742	236,047	2,178,789	2,124,424
Other trading activities	-	47,480	47,480	51,672
Investment income	-	28	28	67
Total Income	1,942,742	283,555	2,226,297	2,176,163
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities	1,942,742	272,254	2,214,996	2,183,991
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Expenditure	1,942,742	272,254	2,214,996	2,183,991
Net Income / (Expenditure)	-	11,301	11,301	(7,828)
Brought forward at 1 January 2016	-	166,394	166,394	174,222
Carried forward at 31 December 2016	-	177,695	177,695	166,394

Statement of Financial Position

	2016	2015
Non-Current Assets		
Tangible assets	1,058,759	1,061,045
Current Assets		
Receivables	56,628	45,054
Cash and cash equivalents	1,135,466	1,019,158
Payables: amounts falling due within 1 year	(1,153,292)	(1,038,997)
Net Current Assets	38,802	25,215
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	1,097,561	1,086,260
Reserves		
Unrestricted funds	1,097,561	1,086,260
Restricted funds	-	-
Equity attributable to owners of the company	1,097,561	1,086,260



ICOS receives financial support from Irish Aid towards the provision of a range of services related to the implementation of its Fellowship Programmes



ICOS has signed the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

Please send your feedback to code@icosirl.ie

See p10 and www.dochas.ie/code for more information

Photo Credits:

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