

MEDIA UPDATE 21/5/14 – Contact Dave Moore, Communications Officer - 087 0668559

5 college closures in 5 weeks

What ICOS is saying

ICOS Director Sheila Power:

“The college closures crisis has shone a light on rogue operators within the international education sector – problems that have been known for many years but not yet addressed by a Quality Mark system that first came under discussion under the *last* government.”

“Students faced with college closures are victims of a poorly regulated private college sector. Talk of future tough enforcement is no substitute for swift and compassionate measures to alleviate the distress of hundreds of displaced students already in Ireland and countless more booked, paid and yet to travel.”

“Students not in classes – in some cases now for more than 5 weeks - is an urgent education problem that needs an urgent education solution. The scale of the situation compared to the capacity of existing providers is such that any adequate response will essentially require the authorities to create a ‘pop-up’ English language college alongside other creative solutions for specific student groups.”

What ICOS is doing

ICOS has been on the ground working with students from each of the Dublin colleges that have been closed by their owners, including organising a number of support and information meetings for those affected. We have begun seeking to contact students registered with Allied Irish College in Cork, although working with affected students will be especially challenging for a small Dublin-based organisation.

We have been heavily using social media to interact with students, address concerns and share information – the dedicated website for **#collegeclosures** is <http://collegeclosures.icosirl.ie>. We are in email contact with well over 800 affected students, and have received an enormous volume of email and Facebook enquiries through the last period.

We have organised a meeting today for student creditors of Eden College and Irish Business School ahead of formal creditors meetings on Friday and Monday respectively to ensure that students are not further disadvantaged in the forthcoming liquidation process.

We have been consistently calling on the Irish authorities to recognise the urgency of the current situation and to engage directly with students to solve immediate problems.

ICOS own proposals for solutions to the present crisis have also been sent to government and we anticipate an early meeting to discuss.

What students are doing

There is much self-organised activity from students, from blogs and social media to letters and press statements.

Today will see the first student-organised protest, called by former Millennium College students, to assemble for 12 noon at the INIS office on Burgh Quay with a march to the Department of Education and Skills to follow. The protest has been called under the name “The School-less Movement”.

Students at BCT College – a college currently suspended from the issue of new visas for non-EU students – are especially concerned that their own limbo situation be resolved without further delay and have been seeking media attention for their plight – see http://www2.icosirl.ie/filestore/BCT_student_letter.pdf

Notes for editors

The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) is an independent organisation, founded in 1970, advocating for the rights of all international students in Ireland, whether studying in higher education, further education, in a language school or other setting.

Contrary to some reporting, neither Kavanagh College, Eden College, Irish Business School (IBS), Millennium College nor Allied Irish College were closed by the Irish authorities. In each case, the owners announced the closure of the operation and – students believe – simply walked away from their responsibilities.