

31st January 2014

Foreign Policy Review,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
79-80 St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2.

Dear Sir / Madam,

On behalf of Kimmage Development Studies Centre, I would like to make the following points in response to the Department's solicitation views as part of the on-going review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations.

1. KDSC supports continued efforts to promote Ireland as a destination for international students and encourages an intensification of DFAT efforts in this regard.
2. KDSC encourages DFAT to ensure that such increased service provision in the education market be developed in a way that maximizes mutual benefits to Ireland and to countries sending students to Ireland to study - through, for example, the promotion of strategic partnerships between Irish universities and universities overseas, capacity building of institutions of higher education overseas (where relevant), further Irish government support for joint research activities and support for exchange programmes between Irish universities and overseas institutions.
3. KDSC encourages continued support by Irish Aid for its fellowships programme, targeting countries and sectors that are less likely to be able to pay for educational opportunities in Ireland. KDSC particularly encourages Irish Aid to review its current fellowship scheme to ensure that the recent focus of Irish Aid fellowships on programme countries and government agencies that partner with Irish Aid should also include other deserving groups - particularly potential fellows from fragile states (in line with the recent Irish Aid strategic commitments with respect to fragile states) - including those in areas that Irish Aid doesn't have a permanent presence.
4. KDSC also recommends that DFAT / Irish Aid review its decision to pay EU rates for overseas fellows to Irish institutions - this decision has implications for the ability of institutions such as KDSC to raise income from international student tuition fees. It also creates inequities between fees being paid by Irish Aid fellows and fees being paid by other fellows funded by the missionary and NGO sector

and may create a sense among other international students paying full fees that they are being treated unfairly compared to Irish government funded fellows.

5. KDSC encourages Irish Aid to ensure that all fellows coming from developing countries are exposed to a development education component as part of their studies - including, for example, those visiting Ireland on IDEAS scholarships from Vietnam - to maximize the chances that any technical training received in Ireland under Irish Aid auspices will result in developmental gains when graduates return home.

6. KDSC also encourages DFAT to take practical steps to ease the ability of Irish academic institutions to invite both faculty of institutions overseas and prospective students to come to Ireland. Helpful measures in this regard would include the ability for sponsoring institutions to pay visa costs for visiting faculty by bank transfer (rather than payments by physical Eurocheck) at all embassies and consulates worldwide, and the establishment of a point of contact in DFAT in Dublin for universities to contact should any invited faculty from overseas experience difficulties with their visa applications. DFAT should pay particular attention to ensure that any senior faculty from institutions overseas do not encounter significant difficulties in visa application processes.

7. Finally, KDSC urges DFAT and other government agencies concerned with the promotion of Irish education overseas markets to consider the establishment and promotion of a multi-language web portal to promote and market Irish flexible and distance education / on-line education offerings to overseas markets together with the use of an Irish branded quality assurance / seal of approval for such offerings. This could be linked with the already excellent education in Ireland website.

KDSC would also like to affirm its support for the submission of Dóchas made as part of this review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robt Kevlihan', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Kevlihan, FCA, Ph.D,
Executive Director,
Kimmage Development Studies Centre,
Dublin.