



IRISH LANGUAGE

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Irish Language Heritage at MIC

The MIC Irish Language Policy sets out principles that are core to the long-standing heritage of the College as encapsulated by the institutional Mission Statement which includes the following declaration:

*“The College promotes a sense of identity enriched by an awareness of Catholic tradition, the cultures, languages and traditions of Ireland, **and its special commitment to the Irish language.**”¹*

The special commitment to the Irish language endures, with its origins at the College coinciding with the inclusion of Irish as an academic subject in the national education curriculum at the outset of the twentieth century and later, with the establishment, of *an Roinn Oideachais* (and corresponding Ministerial appointment) following closure of the National Board of Education, where the new emphasis on Irish language and culture taking root within *an Roinn* found expression at the College itself, where all curriculum subjects were taught through the medium of Irish.

1.2 Legislative Footing

Later, the Universities Act, 1997, set out the objects of a university under Part III, Section 12 which, *inter alia*, specifies that these shall include “[*promotion of*] the official languages of the State, with special regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language and promotion of the distinctive cultures of Ireland.”²

As a recognised Public Body, MIC is subject to the Official Languages Acts, which affords special status to the Irish language as the first language of the state. The College has a statutory obligation to comply with the provisions of the Acts and with Regulations in respect of the Irish language that are made by the relevant Minister under Section 9(1) of the Official Languages Act. Additionally, the body of legislation lends impetus in terms of the onus that is on the College to combine its statutory responsibilities with its role as an exemplar of leadership in educational provision.

Accordingly, for reasons linked to the heritage of the College, its purpose as a university-level higher education institution, and its status as a Public Body with statutory responsibilities, the Irish language enjoys special privilege at MIC at the level of governance and in terms of the College’s commitment to the public, as well as at the level of teaching, learning and research.

Under this Policy, as derived from those sources, the College shall meet its statutory obligations and, further, shall be proactive in its support for usage of the Irish language both as a medium of general communication within the institution as well as a medium for the delivery of service which provision shall be not only informed by reference to relevant statutory instruments but shall be subject to the principle of continuous quality assurance as a means of fulfilling the mission of the College to the highest possible standard of excellence.

1.3 The Principles of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Interculturalism

Additionally, in its commitment to excellence in respect of the Irish language, the College shall be informed by the principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism, principles that are

¹ Emphasis added.

² MIC is not within the schedule of universities set out under the Universities Act. However, the College is regarded as a university-level higher education institution and adopts the provisions of the *Universities Act* in the formation of its governing instruments and governance culture, inclusive of its adherence to the *Code of Governance for Irish Universities*, 2019.

also upheld under statutory provision. The approach taken by the College shall be to give expression to the spirit of all relevant statutory instruments and legislative provision by striving to ensure that, concurrently:

- a) each of its stakeholders, including employees of the College, their peers, members of the student community, contacting parties, and members of the general public, shall be enabled to have confidence that the College's due obligations to them are met through the authentic expression of its policies and procedures; and,
- b) these stakeholders shall enjoy a flourishing and inclusive culture of mutual interaction, inclusive of engagement between members of the College community aimed at the flourishing of Irish language usage, as equal participants in the activities of the College.

2. Scope

2.1 First Level of Applicability

The Irish Language Policy shall apply, primarily, to all staff of MIC in keeping with their respective responsibilities for upholding the mission of the College as well as the institution's obligations under the law and other relevant public service directives.

2.2 Second Level of Applicability

There shall also be an obligation on third party providers of service to the College to assist the College in meeting its commitments, as outlined in this Policy, as deemed relevant and necessary by the College as the contracting party and as falling within the ambit of such third parties' contracted responsibilities.

3. Related Documents

3.1 Relevant Legislation

- *Bunreacht na hEireann* (Article 8)
- Public Services Management Act, 1997
- Universities Act, 1997
- Education Act, 1998
- Official Languages Act, 2003
- Official Languages Act (Amendment), 2021
- Acht na Gaeltachta, 2012
- Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2015
- Equal Status Acts, 2000-2018

3.2 Relevant College Documents

- MIC Mission Statement
- MIC Strategic Plan
- MIC Customer Charter
- MIC Equality Policy
- MIC Promotional Material Brand Guidelines
- MIC House Writing Styles

4. Statutory Obligations

4.1 Schedule of Statutory Obligations

The College shall meet all relevant statutory obligations in respect of the Irish language and shall do this, principally, by implementing the provisions of the Official Languages Acts (inclusive of the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021). The College shall meet these obligations by ensuring, *inter alia*, that:

- i. official publications of the College, which shall include the following (as well as any other documents so prescribed by the Minister), shall be published in Irish and in English:
 - o Annual Reports
 - o Audited Accounts/Financial Statements
 - o Statements of institutional strategy
- ii. any official signage or stationery used by the College that includes text in the Irish language shall position that text first in order of language used, shall use a format that is, at a minimum, identical to the text in other languages, including the English language, and shall communicate the same information as other languages;
- iii. any response to communications initiated by external parties in Irish including communications by letter, by e-mail or through the College's official social media accounts shall be in the Irish language;
- iv. information governance and data retention systems, electronic and otherwise, shall correctly record and state the name, address and title of individuals whose personal details are in the Irish language and which the College must retain for administrative purposes in accordance with its Data Privacy Notice;
- v. the content and layout of official College forms, inclusive of electronic forms, shall be in the medium of Irish, or in both Irish and English, in accordance with requirements as set down by the Minister;
- vi. any text incorporated into the official logo of the College, where altered, renewed or otherwise created, shall be in Irish and English, with the Irish text preceding the English text and in a form that shall be no less prominent, visible or legible;
- vii. advertising in respect of the mission and services of the College shall include content in the Irish language, a minimum of which shall be no less than 20% of the total advertising expenditure per annum;
- viii. expenditure in respect of advertising shall include an apportionment of 5% of the total amount to the 'Irish language media' (i.e. any external media-producing entity where at least 50% of the content created is through the Irish language);
- ix. any recorded oral announcements shall be in Irish or in Irish and in English, with Irish taking precedence in the order of announcements and with the same information provided in all languages used.

4.2 Particular Responsibility of MIC as a Higher Education Institutional (HEI)

As a HEI, MIC recognises that it has a particular obligation to draw from statutory provision towards advancement of the Irish language in its educational context and shall be proactive in enhancing curricular and other relevant operational services for this purpose.

5. College Governance

5.1 The Irish Language within the College Governance System

Both preservation of the special position of the Irish language at the College, as a well as the oversight and accountability for implementation of the College's statutory obligations, shall be considered matters of College governance, with various College bodies having responsibility for implementation of required functions.

5.2 The College Bodies

The College Bodies (as constituted and as re-constituted or created, from time to time) shall uphold the commitment of the College to the Irish language in accordance with its Mission Statement. In particular, the Governing Authority of the College shall ensure that the institution remains accountable for this commitment as well as for undertakings required in accordance with all relevant statutory provision. Where matters of resourcing require deliberation, the Executive Team, primarily, shall act on behalf of the Governing Authority and where academic issues pertaining to the Irish language are concerned, the Academic Council shall be the primary deliberative body.

5.3 *Bord na Gaeilge*

A body charged with supporting and advising the College of its undertakings in respect of the Irish language, *Bord na Gaeilge*, shall be amongst the standing committees appointed by the College. *Bord na Gaeilge* shall be subject to terms of reference set and approved (and as revised from time to time) by its duly-constituted parent committee.

Bord na Gaeilge shall have the ability to issue recommendations (through submission to its parent committee) for enhancement of the quality of the College's actions towards implementation of its institutional commitment to the Irish language and of its actions in respect of relevant statutory provision. In the conducting of its business and the carrying out of its activities, *Bord na Gaeilge* shall serve to give expression to the College's commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism and to all College policies and statutory provision created for this purpose.

5.4 Performance Oversight & Reporting

The College President shall appoint, from senior management, a member of staff to oversee the performance and reporting obligations of the College under the Official Languages Acts. The College President shall also ensure that a summary of performance outcomes and reporting requirements is included in the Annual Report of the College.

6. Information Provision

6.1 Provision of Information in the Context of Statutory Compliance

As stated above (Section 4.1), the College shall meet its statutory obligations in respect of the provision of information in the Irish language and this shall include all requirements governing the provision of information by the College as set down in the Irish Language Acts and by the Minister, from time to time. The provision of information in association with the requirements of the Acts and/or by the Minister shall be regarded as a **compliance** action of the College.

6.2 Provision of Information in the Context of Fidelity to the College Mission

The College shall continuously strive to enhance the scope of its commitment to the Irish language in respect of the provision of information – to students, staff, and the general public - in ways that are not governed specifically by statutory provision but are nonetheless consistent with the special importance of the Irish language to the College as understood in its historical context and as expressed in its Mission Statement. This shall be regarded as **mission fidelity** action of the College.

7. Service Provision

7.1 Service Provision

The College shall remain compliant by meeting its commitments to the provision of relevant services in accordance with the requirements of the Official Languages Acts, as well as through its Customer Charter and other policies and procedures deemed appropriate to the process of satisfying service provision requirements.

Recruitment and selection processes shall be responsive to requirements set down in statutory provision and/or by the Minister in respect of the provision of public services.

Outside of statutory requirements, the College shall endeavour to continuously enhance the levels of competency of staff in the Irish language, particularly in areas where the quality of communication with members of the general public, as well as with other beneficiaries of College services, inter-murally and extra-murally, can be improved.

Irish Language Strategy

The College shall meet its obligations in respect of the Irish language by means of an Irish Language Strategy, which strategy shall identify the means by which College objectives shall be delivered as well as the resources to be allocated for implementation of the strategy. In keeping with the principles set out in this policy, and with the principles of good governance more broadly, the Irish Language Policy shall be formed through inclusive consultation with persons and groupings within a body of stakeholders that reflects the diversity of the College community.

8. Revision History

Revision	Document History	Reviewed By ET	Approved By UR
0	Initial Release	ET2024#07	UR2024#06