

University of Limerick submission to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Concerning the white paper:

Review of Higher Education Institutions

General commentary:

- Outline contents of review terms of reference: The level of detail provided in this key section (page 14-16) makes it difficult to comment in detail. In particular a greater clarity in relation to the issue of compliance v enhancement would be welcome. In relation to *“aspects of enhancement to be explored”*, it is not immediately evident how the enhancement theme will be chosen and by whom it will be chosen. The default purpose of the review main visit (page 18) is to *“focus upon exploring quality enhancements through questioning and dialogue with the institution”*. An exclusive focus upon enhancement with the exclusion of compliance seems unbalanced. Further consultation with the institutions on this issue would be desirable prior to finalization of the terms of reference. A focus upon an as yet undecided enhancement theme seems overly ambitious, given the timelines involved. Perhaps the pursuit and monitoring of an enhancement theme should be pursued outside the institutional review framework on this occasion.
- Publication of full terms of reference and a supporting handbook as soon as is possible would be helpful.
- A detailed supporting handbook, providing greater clarity and practical guidance (including the provision of appropriate exemplars) regarding the SAR preparation/content and focus of the site visit would be welcome.
- In addition to providing training for external reviewers, appropriate training/information workshops for personal within the educational institutions tasked with coordinating/leading review preparation would be welcome. Such activities should support clarification and practical interpretation of the final QQI review handbook document.
- A proposed review date for the University of Limerick of September 2018-June 2019 is appropriate from our perspective, assuming the availability of a finalized review process & supporting handbook in early 2016.

Specific comments:

- Clarification of the following statement (page 2) would be welcome: *“It also incorporates, where reasonable and subject to timing, reviews of compliance with the code of practice for the International Education Mark”*.
- Clarification of the following statement (page 2) would be welcome, with perhaps the inclusion of examples of issues that could trigger a ‘for cause’ review: *“though cyclical review can lead to directions, it is not linked to directions and outcomes that may change the status of QQI’s approval of a provider’s Quality Assurance Procedures”*
- Page 5 statement *“each institution is provided with an opportunity to identify standards and benchmarks for quality relevant to their own mission and context. Institutions are encouraged to derive these from international sources”*: Exemplars of what QQI themselves would consider key international benchmarks and, where appropriate, any associated ‘league tables’ would be useful.
- Page 6 statement: *“Review is complementary and proportionately related to the specific lifecycle of engagement of the institution and other engagements between the institution and QQI”*. Clarification of this statement, and what it is likely to mean in practice would be welcome
- Page 8: Discussion focusing upon how enhancement themes will provide a lens through which a Review Team can explore Institutional QA. Clarification would be welcome.
- Page 10: *“Review teams will include at least one member with international experience”*. We would consider it appropriate that the review teams would contain more than a single international reviewer.