

QQI POLICY RESTATEMENT

POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION IN RELATION TO LEARNERS FOR PROVIDERS OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

[NQAI 2003, Restated 2015]

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to restate for the benefit of providers, those procedures for access, transfer and progression (ATP) of learners that they are, for the time being, required to establish or to continue to operate in order to comply with the requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012) (the 2012 Act).

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) established “*Policies, actions and procedures for the promotion of access, transfer and progression*” (March 2003). This was done in tandem with NQAI’s establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The document included statutory determinations under section 8(2)(d) of the Qualifications Act (1999) of procedures to be implemented by providers of further and higher education and training. Section 84(15) of the 2012 Act states that: until such time as QQI establishes its own policies and criteria for ATP, a provider to whom section 56 of that Act applies (that is relevant providers and linked providers) shall establish procedures for access, transfer and progression of learners in accordance with the procedures established by NQAI.

QQI has no immediate plans to adopt new policies and criteria under Section 56 of the 2012 Act¹. Public consultation on ATP in 2013 confirmed that QQI’s policy on ATP was seen as important but did not disclose any compelling case for urgent change to the 2003 determinations. QQI is engaging in ongoing consultation on the most appropriate way to develop new policies and criteria. This acknowledges also the review of the NFQ scheduled for 2016, which also provides for review of the associated ATP policy and procedures.

NQAI presented its policy alongside a vision, operational principles and objectives for access, transfer and progression with a variety of actions and procedures recommended to itself, the former

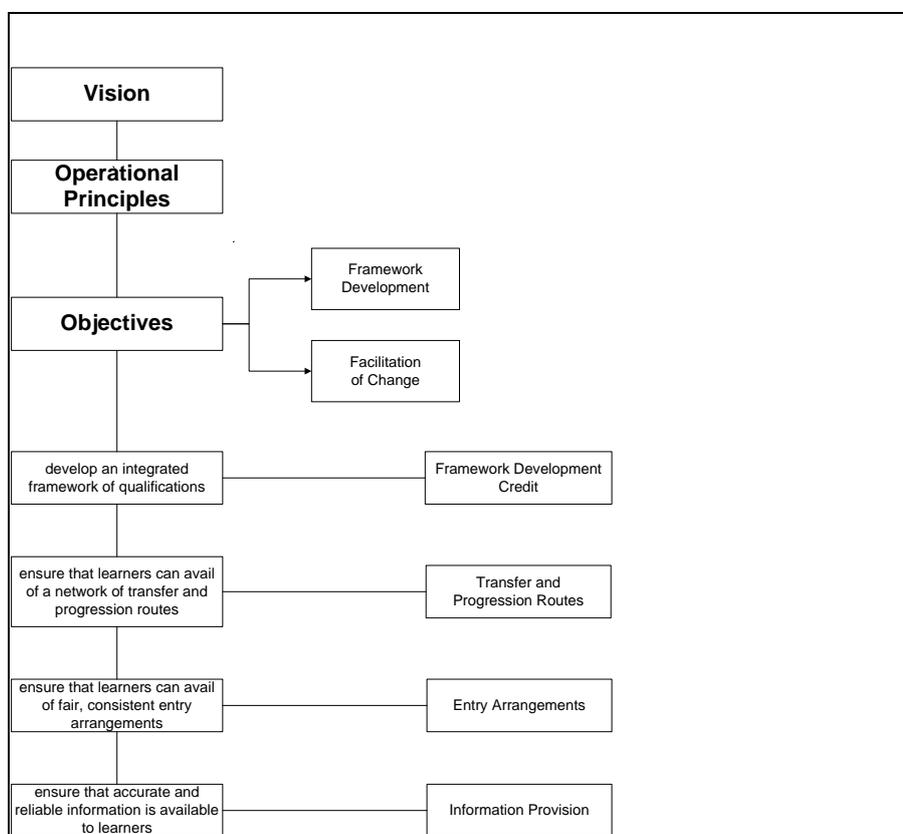
¹ As discussed in the [Green Paper 4.5](#) (May 2013), available on www.QQI.ie

awards councils and to providers. The broad vision, principles and objectives remain valid and relevant to all actors in the system. The specific recommendations to national bodies are in some cases rendered moot by subsequent policy developments by NQAI or the award councils or are rendered less relevant by the amalgamation of these bodies into QQI. QQI continues to adhere to the broad policy approach and the recommendations in its operation as a quality assurance and awarding body.

Relevant and linked providers are required to develop procedures for access, transfer and progression for a variety of specific purposes under the 2012 Act. To make their specific obligations clearer this document extracts and republishes those sections of the 2003 document (in blue) that relate specifically to providers. These provisions had previously been featured in Addendum 3 of the 2003 document. A number of editorial changes have been made to update obsolete references to the former bodies.

The basic structure of the policy (see *figure 1* below) grouped the procedures into four: credit, transfer and progression routes, entry arrangements, and information provision.

Figure 1: Structure of QQI's ATP Policy



2 CREDIT

The Authority considers that it is appropriate to determine interim procedures for providers prior to the implementation of a national approach to credit. These procedures relate to the specification of arrangements for the recognition of prior learning by providers of education and training programmes leading to awards. These are as follows:

- All providers are required to develop a statement of arrangements available in respect of each of their programmes for the recognition of prior learning, for entry, for credit towards an award and for access to a full award. These statements should define the purposes for which recognition of prior learning processes can be used, ie., to enable entry to the programme; to provide exemption from programme requirements or credit towards an award; or to establish eligibility for a full award. Where the recognition of prior learning is used to enable entry to a programme, the statement of arrangements available should indicate to learners the competences needed to succeed on the programme.
- In relation to providers whose programmes are validated by the QQI or who have been delegated authority by QQI to make awards, this statement of arrangements must be consistent with the policies and procedures for QQI Awards.

Note: NQAI adopted “*Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training*” in 2004². The principles and guidelines are intended to guide institutions and awarding bodies in developing their credit systems to complement the NFQ. They remain in effect and supplement these procedures.

The former Further Education and Training Awards Council developed a credit system for its awards. This system has been incorporated into and superseded by QQI’s “*Policy for Determining Awards Standards*” (QP.12, 2014). In determining procedures for credit towards an award, further education and training providers are constrained by the credit assigned to the target award (major, minor, special purpose and/or supplemental). Providers of QQI FET awards do not assign award credits.

² Available on www.QQI.ie

3 PROGRESSION AND TRANSFER ROUTES

The Authority has determined procedures to be implemented by providers to facilitate the extension of transfer and progression routes at all levels of the system, and to clarify for learners the arrangements for use of transfer and progression routes:

- Providers, in co-operation with the relevant awarding bodies, should identify transfer and progression routes into and onwards from all programmes leading to awards in the framework.
- In relation to transfer and progression routes identified, providers should also specify any particular attainments, in the awards to which their programmes lead, that are required for transfer or progression (e.g. where the achievement of a Distinction in an award is required to facilitate access to a programme leading to an award at the next level).
- Providers should make the necessary adaptations to programmes to facilitate participants in making successful transitions; this procedure refers to the participation needs of all learners, but particularly those who are accessing programmes by non-standard routes, and includes transfer or progression into and out of programmes.

4 ENTRY ARRANGEMENTS

Entry is understood as being entry on initial access or by transfer or progression. Providers will be required to ensure that:

- Entry arrangements are clear, decisions on allocation of places on programmes are transparent, and all applicants are treated in a fair, equal and consistent manner
- Appropriate arrangements are made for an appeals process
- For every programme, prospective learners have available statements of the knowledge, skill and competence needed as a basis for successful participation, and there is comparability in the factors defined for similar programmes
- For each programme, there is clear definition of the awards in the framework that are recognised as demonstrating eligibility for entry and, where relevant, the attainments required in these awards.

5 INFORMATION PROVISION

To ensure the maximum effect of the framework in promoting transparency and clarity for learners, the Authority has determined procedures to be followed by providers to ensure that learners and prospective learners are able to get comprehensive information on the possibilities for access, transfer and progression in a clear, straightforward and consistent manner. These procedures are formulated as information protocols to be observed by all relevant providers as defined in the legislation:

- All providers are to inform learners commencing programmes of the name of the awarding body and the title, award-type and framework level designation of the award associated with that programme.
- All providers, for each and every programme, will publish in a standard and accessible format:
 - The arrangements for eligibility to enter, including a statement of the knowledge, skill and competence needed by the learner as a basis for successful participation on the programme.
 - Arrangements to assess learner's eligibility to enter.
 - Further selection arrangements, where these apply.
 - A statement of arrangements available for recognition of prior learning, for entry to each of their programmes, and for access to an award.
 - Possibilities for transfer and/or progression associated with the programme, including any relevant specific progression linkages.
 - Details of learning support available for specific learner groups such as learners with disabilities, or learners whose mother tongue is not English.
- All information and publicity documentation referring to a programme leading to an award will include a statement of the arrangements for entry, and a description of the transfer / progression possibilities into and out of the programme.
- Any supplementary document (i.e. certificate or diploma supplement to promote transparency of an award) issued by providers with independent awarding powers will include information about:
 - The placing of the award in the national framework of qualifications – the name of the awarding body and the title, award-type and framework level designation of the award.

- The transfer and progression opportunities associated with the award.