



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

**Topic  
Specific**

**Apprenticeship Programmes**

# **Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines**

developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship  
Programmes

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# Topic Specific

## Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

DEVELOPED BY QQI FOR PROVIDERS OF STATUTORY APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES

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## FOREWORD

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The introduction of additional employer-led apprenticeships to the Irish education and training system is an innovative and positive development and is expected to complement the established suite of apprenticeships. The following Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeship seek to provide substantial and tailored guidance for the development, delivery and evaluation of apprenticeship programmes by the party with quality assurance accountability to QQI, referred to below as the Coordinating Provider. This has led to a necessary emphasis on the Coordinating Provider role which is expected to be largely fulfilled by a provider operating within a wider consortium. The consortium itself will often be initiated by employers or employer representative bodies in order to meet the identified needs of employers.

The governance of a number of the elements that comprise apprenticeship extends beyond QQI's statutory quality assurance and awarding functions. In particular, the statutory role of SOLAS to approve and register employers; to register apprentices; to establish Industrial Training Orders<sup>1</sup>; and to make statutory rules for the operation of apprenticeship, requires early acknowledgement in the context of this document. SOLAS and the HEA also have funding roles for further and higher education and training, respectively.

As a result, these QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship refer, at a number of points, to the requirements of SOLAS as statutory regulator in order to clarify for the Coordinating Provider that its responsibilities with, and on behalf of, a given consortium will be exercised within a context in which the roles of state organisations co-exist. However, it is the wish of SOLAS and the HEA that their roles and responsibilities be capable of complementing each other in order to meet the needs of employers and apprentices, as well as providers. In this context, and in conjunction with consortia, these Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes will be reviewed when an appropriate period has elapsed for their application to inform a further iteration.

June 2016

<sup>1</sup> *An Industrial Training Order is an order made under the 1967 Industrial Training Act that designates an activity as a specific occupation for the purposes of regulating apprenticeships within that occupation.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Legal and policy context

This document is issued under Section 27(1) (a) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (the 2012 Act)<sup>2</sup>.

These statutory topic-specific guidelines need to be read in conjunction with the Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines. These guidelines add to the core QA by addressing specific responsibilities for the quality assurance of apprenticeship programmes.

### 1.2 Purpose

This document offers specialised guidance to providers of apprenticeship programmes on good practice in the quality assurance of programmes for apprenticeship education and training and related services.

Providers are expected to have regard to these guidelines to inform the establishment or renewal of their quality assurance procedures for apprenticeship programmes and related services.

This document will also be of interest to the wider group of apprenticeship stakeholders, including all those directly involved in the education or training of apprentices; employers of apprentices; employers' associations; occupational bodies; regulatory bodies; trade unions; communities of practice; apprentices; teachers and other interested parties.

The focus of these guidelines on **providers** does not imply that providers necessarily initiate or lead the establishment of apprenticeship programmes. The decision to establish an apprenticeship programme is expected to be shaped by employers and the intended learning outcomes of such a programme are expected to be led by the requirements of the occupation concerned. Nevertheless, it is important to note that QQI's role here is to establish guidelines for providers (of education and training programmes). It should also be noted that the relationship between the Coordinating Provider, employers of apprentices that are not part of consortia, and the statutory regulator, will be clarified in the context of specific apprenticeship programmes.

## 2 CONTEXT, SCOPE, ASSUMPTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 Context

These guidelines apply to all statutory apprenticeship programmes governed by the Industrial Training Act 1967. Under this Act, the further education and training authority, SOLAS, has a range of statutory responsibilities; including the designation of statutory apprenticeships via Industrial Training Orders.

The Department of Education and Skills commissioned a review of apprenticeship in 2013. A report, *Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland*, was subsequently published in December of that year. Following this, an Apprenticeship Council was launched on

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/print>

18 November 2014 on an interim basis. The Apprenticeship Council<sup>3</sup> is tasked with the expansion of apprenticeship across a range of qualification levels into new sectors of the economy, leading to the ‘new’ apprenticeships referred to in the preceding paragraph.

The *Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland* report made recommendations for apprenticeship as follows:<sup>4</sup>

*“Apprenticeship is a programme of structured education and training which formally combines and alternates learning in the work place with learning in an education or training centre, (a dual system, i.e. a blended combination of on-the-job employer-based training and off-the-job training) whose completion:*

- *prepares the participant for a specific occupation, and*
- *leads to a qualification nationally recognised under the National Framework of Qualifications at any level from Level 5 upwards.*

*Every apprentice should be employed under an approved Contract of Apprenticeship for the duration of training.*

*Apprenticeship training should be substantial in depth and duration, and the apprentice should be employed in a real job. For a programme to be classified as an apprenticeship at entry level, it should have a duration of no less than two years. The structure of the programme should provide for more than 50% workplace-based learning.*

*Graduates of apprenticeship programmes should be qualified to work autonomously in a competent, professional and independent capacity in their selected field.*

*Apprenticeships should be open to persons of all age groups above the statutory school leaving age. They are a valued mode of learning both for initial entrants to the labour market and for those who wish to continue upskilling. Apprenticeships must prepare the participant for a new job role.*

## 2.2 Apprenticeship stakeholders and partnerships

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The reference to stakeholders relevant to the development of an apprenticeship programme include:

- a) Prospective employers of apprentices
- b) Practitioners in the occupation concerned
- c) Providers of education and training services
- d) Occupational associations
- e) Occupational regulators
- f) State organisations responsible for funding and regulating apprenticeships

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.apprenticeshipcouncil.ie/faq.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> [Department of Education and Skills \(2013\) Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland, Dublin Executive Summary, Section 1 p7, http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Review-of-Apprenticeship-Training-in-Ireland.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Review-of-Apprenticeship-Training-in-Ireland.pdf)



- g) Consortia established to develop apprenticeships
- h) And, not least, the prospective apprentices themselves

### 2.2.1 Primary stakeholder roles in the provision of apprenticeship programmes

Within the broader stakeholder groups, some stakeholders will hold primary roles in the provision of **apprenticeship programmes**.

- 1) Employers of apprentices
- 2) The Coordinating Provider
- 3) Collaborating providers including off-the-job providers
- 4) Apprentices

The Coordinating Provider role can be fulfilled by a **relevant or linked provider** (as defined in section 2 of the 2012 Act).

A Coordinating Provider will be an entity for whom education and training is a primary function though not necessarily its only function.

External to, and supportive of, these primary partners are a variety of other entities, with distinctive roles and with which the primary partners will interact.

These guidelines seek to lay out, in clear terms, the fundamental relationships between these four primary roles. These relationships are necessary to form the foundation for development, maintenance and provision of stable apprenticeship programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. These guidelines will include an outline of structures considered necessary for the stable implementation of both new and existing apprenticeship programmes.

### 2.2.2 Stakeholders involved in ensuring the apprenticeship programme meets the requirements of the occupation

It is essential that the apprenticeship programme is led by, conforms to, and evolves with, the requirements of the occupation. The provider of the apprenticeship programme has a responsibility to ensure this but those requirements are determined by entities such as: employers, occupational associations, and any occupational regulators that may not be directly involved in the provision.

In principle, it is possible for the key stakeholders in a particular occupation to form an entity that could become a Coordinating Provider. This arrangement is likely to be atypical. Where the provider of an apprenticeship programme does not comprise all the key stakeholders, the Coordinating Provider will need to find other ways to maintain close links with those key stakeholders (2.3) to ensure that the apprenticeship programme meets the requirements of the occupation.

There are different ways in which this might be accomplished. One tenable

approach is outlined within this guideline as an indicative example (Appendix 2). This involves the establishment of a **Consortium Steering Group** (CSG) whose membership and functions are set out in Appendix 2.

## 2.3 Scope and range of these guidelines - to whom do they apply

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These guidelines focus on the quality assurance of apprenticeship programmes and related services through the lens of providers (relevant or linked).

The guidelines contained in this document apply directly to relevant or linked **providers** involved (or prospective relevant or linked providers to be involved) with any apprenticeship programme. Through these, the guidelines apply indirectly to others involved in the provision of apprenticeship programmes.

The concepts in the guidelines apply equally to 'new' apprenticeships and to established apprenticeships, while recognising their different stages of development.

### 2.3.1 Assumed characteristics of apprenticeship programmes

Apprenticeship programmes, within the scope of these guidelines, will share the following characteristics:

- a) The Programme will prepare the participant for a specific occupation for which an **Occupational Profile** (to be defined later) has been established.
- b) Access to the programme is via a contract of apprenticeship between an **approved employer of apprentices** and the apprentice.
- c) The programme will lead to a professional award at an NFQ level, between Level 5 and Level 9 inclusive, that is aligned with the **QQI Professional Award-Type Descriptor** for that level<sup>5</sup> and consistent with the approved **Occupational Profile**. QQI may issue a separate set of guidelines that will cover apprenticeship programmes developed at NFQ Level 10.
- d) The programme is a blended combination of on-the-job (employer-based) training and off-the-job training with an education/training provider.
- e) For a programme to be classified as an apprenticeship at entry level, it must have a duration of no less than two years.
- f) The structure of the programme will provide for more than 50% workplace-based learning.
- g) It is assumed here that apprenticeship programmes will be restricted to occupations approved by the State for inclusion in the list of apprentice occupations and there will be **one programme** (nationally) per occupational profile.

<sup>5</sup> QQI Professional award-type descriptors (award class: Professional) for the Alignment of Professional Awards [http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Professional\\_Award-types\\_PS3\\_2014.pdf](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Professional_Award-types_PS3_2014.pdf).

### 2.3.2 Regulation of apprenticeship

All statutory apprenticeships are regulated by the Industrial Training Act 1967. The QA procedures established by providers must be consistent with these regulatory arrangements. Providers must also adhere to any conditions imposed by the Apprenticeship Council or the relevant funding bodies.

### 2.3.3 Range of guidelines

There are stages in the development, delivery, review and cessation of all programmes of education and training. The apprenticeship stages of particular relevance to programme validation and quality assurance are:

- a) **Stage 1:** Approval of an occupational profile. For additional apprenticeships this role will be fulfilled by the Apprenticeship Council.
- b) **Stage 2:** Development of a detailed apprenticeship programme for the purpose of seeking validation of the programme leading to an award at a specified level in the NFQ.
- c) **Stage 3:** Validation of the apprenticeship programme for an award in the NFQ. The awarding body satisfies itself as to the fitness of the proposed programme in light of the award sought.
- d) **Stage 4:** Provision of the apprenticeship programme and assessment of learners' achievements.
- e) **Stage 5:** Continual reviews and periodic revalidation of the programme.

A new apprenticeship will have to go through the first three stages before it can be offered to prospective apprentices. Established apprenticeship programmes are already at Stages 4 and 5.

This document provides guidelines to providers on those stages concerning the development, validation, provision, periodic review, revalidation and continual quality assurance of apprenticeship programmes i.e. Stages 2 to 5 inclusive only. It is for the Apprenticeship Council to give guidance on Stage 1.

These quality assurance guidelines are intended to help providers ensure that the establishment, provision, maintenance and review of apprenticeships all contribute to the formation of excellent apprentices whose competence is attuned to the needs of employers in Ireland and to their own further personal, educational and continued professional development.

QQI requires that the established apprenticeship programmes and providers transit to quality assurance procedures consistent with those outlined in these guidelines, as soon as practicable.

### **3 GUIDELINES: DEVELOPMENT STAGES**

#### **3.1 QQI QA guidelines**

The focus of the apprenticeship guidelines is to provide a clear framework for quality assurance of apprenticeship programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications, at system, provider and employer levels.

The QA guidelines are addressed, under the 2012 Act, to relevant and linked providers (and prospective relevant and linked providers) of apprenticeship programmes.

#### **3.2 Partners for apprentice formation**

As stated earlier, there are four primary partner roles involved in any apprenticeship programme, all of which are likely to be represented in any consortium established to propose and develop an apprenticeship. These are:

- Employers of apprentices
- The Coordinating Provider
- Collaborating providers who may or may not be relevant providers, including off-the-job education and training providers and other providers
- Apprentices

To avoid doubt and assist those most directly involved in programme development and provision, it is useful to explain some of the terms used in these guidelines to ensure that all stakeholders interpret them in the same way.

- **An Employer of Apprentices** should be taken to mean any contractual employer of apprentices that has been approved by the statutory regulator for apprenticeship. Where the term “employer” or “enterprise” is used, it should be taken (where the context requires) to have the same meaning for the purpose of the guidelines.
- **The Statutory Regulator** is responsible for fulfilling those functions assigned to it under the 1967 Industrial Training Act or its successors. This role is statutorily assigned to SOLAS. This role is distinct from SOLAS’s role as a provider of apprenticeships or as funder of apprenticeships. The statutory regulator appoints authorised officers who carry out activities on its behalf.
- **A Consortium** is a group, normally led by employers and including providers, involved in the development and provision of an apprenticeship programme.
- **A Provider** is a person (an entity with legal personality) who provides, organises or procures a programme of education and training.
- **A Coordinating Provider** is a relevant or linked provider who is ultimately responsible for providing (as defined by the 2012 Act) an apprenticeship programme. Among its responsibilities are the development and maintenance of the curriculum and assessment procedures for the programme and leading the collaborating providers involved. To act as a Coordinating Provider for an

apprenticeship programme, the entity must be a **relevant or linked provider** under the 2012 Act. This means, among other things, that it must be a legal entity and the provision of education and training must be one of its principal functions. If an entity is not already a relevant provider, it may become one through a QQI process.

- A **collaborating provider** is a provider who is formally involved in the provision of an apprenticeship programme and accountable in this respect to the Coordinating Provider.
- An **“off-the-job-provider”** is a collaborating provider involved in an apprenticeship programme with a responsibility for off-the-job education or training. It may be the Coordinating Provider, but if it is not, it is expected to be accountable to the Coordinating Provider for delivery of those elements of the programme within its control.
- A **Relevant Provider** is as defined in section 2(1) of the 2012 Act.
- A **Linked Provider** is as defined in section 2(3) of the 2012 Act.
- A **Programme Board** is as defined in section 3.7.6 (during development) and in section 4 (following development).
- An **Initial Consortium Steering Group** is as defined in section 3.7.
- A **Consortium Steering Group** is a governing entity that might be usefully constructed and established (as envisaged in Appendix 2) and whose role would be to ensure that the apprenticeship programme conforms to, and evolves with, the requirements of the occupation. Its purpose would be to ensure that the apprenticeship programme is enterprise-led and meets labour market needs.
- **Funding Bodies** for apprenticeship are SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). One or both of these bodies will fund each apprenticeship programme in accordance with terms and conditions that they determine.

### 3.3 Awards, programmes and curricula

- An **Apprenticeship Awarding Body** is a legal entity which has the power to make **apprenticeship awards** that are recognised within the NFQ or another kind of awarding body with a joint awarding arrangement to make apprenticeship awards with such an entity. The awarding body may or may not be a provider.
- An **Award** means an award, including a joint award, for education or training, or both, made by an awarding body or in the case of a joint award, by two or more awarding bodies, to a learner to record or certify that the learner has acquired a particular standard of knowledge, skill or competence; it includes (a) a certificate, (b) a diploma, (c) a degree. The **apprenticeship award** made, following successful completion of an apprenticeship programme, is expected to be placed on the NFQ and to be consistent with (i) the occupational profile, (ii) the applicable NFQ professional award-type descriptor in conjunction with (iii) any other applicable award-type descriptor (e.g. a descriptor for an honours bachelor degree).

- **A Programme of Education and Training** is a process by which a learner acquires knowledge, skill or competence and that includes a course of study, a course of instruction and an apprenticeship.
- **A Validated Programme:** A programme of education and training is validated where QQI confirms, under section 45 of the 2012 Act, that the provider of the programme has satisfied it that an enrolled learner of that provider who completes that programme will acquire, and where appropriate, be able to demonstrate, the necessary knowledge, skill or competence to justify an award being offered in respect of that programme. Other awarding bodies have similar procedures for the approval of programmes and so the term ‘validated programme’ is also used in these contexts.
- **A Provider’s Validated Programme:** validation as defined above applies to a provider’s programme rather than to a programme in isolation from a provider. A validated programme is not transferrable from one provider to another. However, a programme may be validated for provision by an expandable group of providers meeting criteria approved at the point of validation and accountable to the Coordinating Provider.
- **A Validated Apprenticeship Programme** means a validated programme based on a curriculum developed and maintained by a **Coordinating Provider**. There would be only one apprenticeship programme per apprenticeship occupation and only one validation process conducted either by the Coordinating Provider (possibly jointly with other awarding bodies) or by QQI (possibly jointly) on application from the Coordinating Provider or a Designated Awarding Body (possibly jointly) where the Coordinating Provider is a Linked Provider.

### 3.4 Occupation approval phase

The State has determined that proposed new occupations should seek formal State approval. Of necessity, progress towards such approval requires a team. These teams can be described as the **Initial Consortium Steering Groups or ICSGs**.

### 3.5 Access to QQI validation

A Coordinating Provider who cannot make awards that are recognised within the framework will need to apply to QQI to have the programme validated or, if a Linked Provider, to the relevant Designated Awarding Body.

Certain prerequisites must be in place before a provider may apply to QQI for validation. These are set out in “*Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI Awards*”<sup>6</sup> and further details are available on QQI’s website. The establishment of QA procedures is one of the requirements for access and the applicable guidelines include the Core QA Guidelines and the QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes (as set out in this document).

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Initial\\_Validation\\_policy\\_7\\_10\\_13.pdf](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Initial_Validation_policy_7_10_13.pdf)

### 3.6 The organisation of the guideline sections

The guidelines below are organised in broad sections as follows:

- 3.7 Guidelines to the pre-validation programme development stage**
- 3.7.1 The organisational structure necessary to make a proposal for validation
  - 3.7.2 Prior to appointment of the Coordinating Provider
  - 3.7.3 The operational role of the Coordinating Provider
  - 3.7.4 Technical and market assessment
  - 3.7.5 The occupational profile and its application
  - 3.7.6 Establishment of a programme board
  - 3.7.7 A systematic consultation process
  - 3.7.8 A systematic programme development approach
  - 3.7.9 Programme design for quality of on-the-job training
  - 3.7.10 Education and training quality within off-the-job phases
  - 3.7.11 Progression pathways
  - 3.7.12 Brand image, occupation and award naming

### **SECTION 4: GUIDELINES TO THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME STAGE**

- 4.1 Occupational memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding
- 4.2 Programme provision
  - 4.2.1 Programme development and approval
  - 4.2.2 Apprentice recruitment, progression and recognition
  - 4.2.3 Programme monitoring and review
  - 4.2.4 Staffing
  - 4.2.5 Teaching and learning
- 4.3 Assessment of apprentice achievement
  - 4.3.1 General comments
  - 4.3.2 Assessment on the job
  - 4.3.3 Assessment off the job
  - 4.3.4 Final assessment of competency
  - 4.3.5 Assessing the assessment

- 4.4 Managing and maintaining quality in apprenticeship programmes
  - 4.4.1 Producing a quality environment
  - 4.4.2 Strategic management of quality – ensuring continued relevance and increased quality
  - 4.4.3 Programme operation – implementing quality in a dynamic environment
  - 4.4.4 Day-to-day management of the programme
- 4.5 Periodic reviews of occupation, the consortium and the programme
  - 4.5.1 Purposes of periodic reviews
  - 4.5.2 Reviewing the occupational profile
  - 4.5.3 Reviewing the partnerships
  - 4.5.4 Reviewing the programme
  - 4.5.5 Other reviews

#### SECTION 5: SUPPORTS FOR APPRENTICES

- 5.1 General issues
- 5.2 Duty of care to young apprentices
- 5.3 Integration into off-the-job institutions
- 5.4 Dealing with competing responsibilities
- 5.5 Special educational and training needs or disabilities
- 5.6 Complaints

#### SECTION 6: INFORMATION PROVISION

- 6.1 Management information and data
- 6.2 Public information

### 3.7 Guidelines to the pre-validation programme development stage

The focus in this section is on managing quality in the programme development process, which includes the responsibilities of the various partners, developing the structure of the proposed programme, the assessment process, the appeal process and rules and criteria for access, transfer, progression and for expulsion of the apprentice throughout the apprenticeship. It includes developing continued holistic administrative and managerial relationships between the stakeholders during the programme's lifetime.

This section will provide guidance on the critical roles of the Coordinating Provider, employers and other providers.



### 3.7.1 The organisational structure necessary to make a proposal for validation

The nature and complexity of relationships between the primary partners in apprenticeship formation makes it necessary that a single provider act as a Coordinating Provider for the proposed programme. The Coordinating Provider will play a role in liaising with employers and other providers as appropriate.

Prior to, or following, the issue of approval for a new occupation by the State authorities, the **Initial Consortium Steering Group (ICSG)** should identify the entity which is to be the Coordinating Provider.

The Initial Consortium Steering Group may establish a new entity to become the Coordinating Provider. Alternatively, it may appoint an existing **relevant or linked provider** to be the Coordinating Provider. This provider would need to apply to QQI or the relevant Designated Awarding Body for validation if it is not able to make the necessary NFQ apprenticeship award (see Section 3.5).

### 3.7.2 Prior to appointment of the Coordinating Provider

Consideration should be given to the role of the Coordinating Provider and its relationships with the partner parties.

- a) The ICSG should ensure that the selection of the Coordinating Provider has the broad support of employers who they represent.
- b) The ICSG should ensure that the programme development role and the programme validation role of the Coordinating Provider is understood by engaged employers.
- c) The ICSG should ensure that the Coordinating Provider's role in the management of programme delivery is understood by engaged employers, and in particular, its formal role and quality assurance responsibilities in relation to QQI.

### 3.7.3 The operational role of the Coordinating Provider

Following appointment, the Coordinating Provider will:

- a) Take responsibility for development of a programme proposal to go forward for validation.
- b) Establish a Programme Board, that is representative of employers and education and training providers, to advise on the programme proposal and operation.
- c) Ensure that the apprenticeship programme conforms to, and evolves with, the requirements of the occupation; is enterprise-led; and meets labour market needs. This and the following might, for example, be accomplished through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.
  - i) Ensure that there is adequate consultation with stakeholders in the development of the programme (see below).

- ii)* Make sure there are systems that ensure employers and labour market trends influence and lead curriculum development, while providing for learners' personal development and their preparation for progression.
- iii)* Ensure the development, in consultation and agreement with employers and other relevant stakeholders such as occupational bodies, of binding memoranda of understanding or memoranda of agreement which commit all parties to a process of implementation of the agreements.
- d)* Develop assessment instruments that adequately support certification of achievement of learning outcomes, employ appropriate grading systems, and all necessary appeal mechanisms. The assessment systems should embrace both on-the-job and off-the-job phases.
- e)* Apply to the awarding body for validation (or validate the programme if it has the required awarding authority).
- f)* Develop such administrative systems as are necessary to ensure efficient and effective management of programme provision, including tracking and managing apprentices' progress.
- g)* Manage the programme during operational delivery.
- h)* Develop and maintain systems for access (in collaboration with employers of apprentices), transfer, progression, and expulsion of participants, including all necessary appeal processes.
- i)* Coordinate the actions of other providers of education and training, who are involved in curriculum development and in programme provision.
- j)* Coordinate with employers to ensure (i) that recruitment of apprentices takes into account the knowledge, skill and competence required for apprentices to have a reasonable chance of completing the programme and (ii) the effective and efficient training of apprentices within the workplace to reach programme learning outcomes.
- k)* Where the relevant occupation is regulated (whether by law or in fact) the Coordinating Provider consults with regulators to ensure that the criteria for access to the apprenticeship and the apprenticeship programme remain consistent with applicable regulation.
- l)* Agree and implement a system with employers for evaluation and review of employer training capacity and for addressing any gaps in that capacity. This might, for example, be accomplished through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.
- m)* Ensure that any expansion of the consortium, through additional providers or employers, has due regard to any relevant quality assurance matters.

- n) Develop a quality system to manage curriculum and assessment updates and improvements where multiple providers are involved, so as to ensure that the national character of the curriculum is maintained and that the approved curriculum is implemented by all collaborating providers, in accordance with the unique validated programme for the apprenticeship.

### 3.7.4 Technical and market assessment

It is essential that the apprenticeship programme be led by the current and future requirements of enterprises. To this end, the identification of employers' needs must be established through consistent, thorough analysis of the market (see Appendix 2 for example) if this has not already been established adequately in Stage 1.

There should be a focus on identification of the broad enterprise sectors relevant to the new occupation through:

- a) A systematic and rigorous process for identifying, as clearly as possible, the enterprise sectors that may need, or may be supportive of, a new apprenticeship training pathway and if applicable a new occupation. This should identify the national distribution of potential employers. This will ensure that the developing programme truly represents the needs of employers nationally.
- b) A similar process should take place to identify off-the-job providers who will be partners in the development.

### 3.7.5 The occupational profile and its application

The **Occupational Profile** is part of the foundation on which the programme is built. It should be approved at **Stage 1**.

The Occupational Profile is expected to describe the skills, knowledge and competences that a person should have to practice autonomously in the occupation.

An informed lay reader of the Occupational Profile, for example a human resource manager, should understand the depth and range of skill, knowledge and competence specified.

The programme development should start by establishing detailed **intended apprenticeship learning outcomes** that are consistent with the Occupational Profile. These should be further refined in light of the QQI Professional Award-Type Descriptors at which point the most appropriate NFQ level should be identified. It is good practice to consult stakeholders at this stage on the intended programme learning outcomes before developing the programme.

Once the intended programme learning outcomes have been established, the programme can be developed to enable learners to achieve those outcomes.

### 3.7.6 Establishment of a Programme Board

The Coordinating Provider should establish a **Programme Board**.

- a) When the market segment is understood, a systematic process should be used to ensure that a representative Programme Board is formed which will represent both a technical understanding of the needs of the occupation, the employment potential and the education and training dimensions. The Programme Board should have the skills necessary to steer the development of the apprentice programme. For example, members might be prospective employers of apprentices, or practitioners in the occupation, providers of education and training services, occupational associations, trade unions, occupational regulators and labour market analysts and such like. Some aspects of the work of the Programme Board might, for example, be assisted by the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.
- b) The Programme Board should always include persons who are representative of employers and off-the-job providers and its governance, constitution and operation should ensure an employer-led development approach.
- c) There should be a system for recording discussions, decisions and outcomes of the Programme Board deliberations and a system for their timely dissemination to stakeholders, where necessary.

### 3.7.7 A systematic consultation process

The Coordinating Provider should establish a quality process to ensure that the Programme Board consults with and advises representative stakeholders, as the intended apprenticeship programme learning outcomes and programme structure are refined in light of the Occupation Profile approved at Stage 1. This and the following might, for example, be accomplished through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

The Programme Board should:

- a) Utilise the available systems for market research including publications of manpower forecasting bodies.
- b) Establish a process that explains how the apprenticeship programme relates to other similar training programmes, so that the apprenticeship programme can be situated in context. Of particular interest should be the identification of other apprenticeship programmes which may act as feeder or transfer qualifications for the programme, or which could benefit from entry to the new programme with advanced standing, learning additional skill, knowledge or competence.
- c) Having regard to the prerogatives of the Apprenticeship Council and funding bodies, establish a system to develop binding memoranda of agreement with employers, education and training providers and others involved in the programme that extend to any additional employers or education and training providers who will participate.

- d) Establish a system to ensure that the funding agencies and other appropriate state bodies are informed and consulted as required.

Once the programme is validated, the functions of the **programme board** will change (see section 4) and its membership may need to be adjusted accordingly.

### 3.7.8 A systematic programme development approach

The Programme Board should adopt a systematic approach to developing the apprenticeship programme proposal, which includes:

- a) Specifying the **intended apprenticeship programme learning outcomes** and the proposed NFQ Level of the terminal award in light of the Occupational Profile.
- b) Estimating demand including regional analysis.
- c) Identifying the roles and responsibilities and the relationships between partners involved in the programme.
- d) Designing the programme for structural and organisational efficiency. This includes considering entry standards, block and/or day release arrangements for off-the-job training, assessment arrangements, the use of flexible and distributed learning techniques and all operational and management issues.
- e) Developing a communication system with employers of apprentices and collaborating providers, including processes for real-time updating of each other with the apprentice's progress.
- f) Giving consideration to efficiency in projected operational costs. For example, design of release phasing could fit employer business cycles, optimising of employer-provided skill training, and reduction of education and training providers' skill training may reduce off-the-job capital and operational costs, and optimising group sizes may impact greatly on operational costs. Efficiency considerations at the design stage can have a very large impact on provision costs.

### 3.7.9 Programme design for quality of on-the-job training

During programme development, particular attention should be given to the development of quality assurance procedures for training within employment. The greater part of the apprentices' formation will take place with the employer and the role of the employer as trainer is crucial to the excellence of the graduate of an apprenticeship programme.

Therefore, the Coordinating Provider should develop quality systems for the following functions. Those systems should also clarify the relationship between the Coordinating Provider and the statutory regulator:

- a) Establish a systematic approach to the involvement of approved and registered employers in delivering apprenticeship programmes. This might, for example, be accomplished through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

- b) Cooperate with the statutory regulator to ensure that the employers approved by the regulator satisfy quality assurance requirements.
- c) Ensure the range of business activity of the employer is such that the apprentice will receive instruction in a sufficient range of skills, knowledge and competences, to satisfy the **intended apprenticeship programme learning outcomes** (see h).
- d) Ensure the employer employs staff who are capable of imparting the training necessary to enable or help learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.
- e) Ensure the employer has a designated mentoring and supportive structure in place with trained staff capable of providing guidance and support to the apprentice throughout his/her training.
- f) Ensure that the employer has an apprenticeship management and administrative structure in place capable of linking with and promptly exchanging two-way data with off-the-job providers, as necessary, for the holistic formation of the apprentice.
- g) This systematic approach should include cooperation with the statutory regulator to review, at appropriate intervals, the employer's capacity to continue as a trainer either at the employer's own request or based on statistical evidence, or reports from apprentices, or reports from off-the-job providers on performance of apprentices from that employer.
- h) Cooperate with the regulatory authority to ensure employers unable to deliver quality provision are no longer approved to employ apprentices.
- i) Where necessary, procedures and criteria should be developed for establishment of some system of cooperative training where the training of an apprentice is shared between several employers, so that employers with limited technical range could employ apprentices, and ensure their holistic training by placing them for periods with other employers.
- j) Consideration might be given to criteria which would apply where part of an apprentice's on-the-job training takes place abroad, and how this might be quality assured. This might be of particular interest to multinational employers. The Coordinating Provider and Programme Board may gain some insight from the QQI guidance document Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards<sup>7</sup>, although not written specifically for apprentice programmes. The European credit accumulation and transfer instruments (ECTS and ECVET) may also assist.
- k) Consideration should be given to processes for dealing with disruption to an apprentice's training, owing to business reduction or failure of the employer's business.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Policy-for-Collaborative-Programmes,-Transnational-Programmes-and-Joint-Awards.aspx>

### 3.7.10 Education and training quality within off-the-job phases

The periods the apprentice spends with the off-the-job provider are likely to provide much of the essential theoretical and situational context for the apprentice's learning. This must be integrated with the on-the-job learning in a mutually supporting relationship for reinforcing and expanding learning. Those off-the-job periods should be designed to allow the apprentice a period of peer reflection and learning within the community of their peers, comparing and learning different approaches to practice within different employers. This is particularly important for those from employers with small numbers of apprentices. Regular communication and information exchange between different off-the-job providers and between collaborating providers and employers is an important indicator of quality.

Therefore, off-the-job providers involved in the programme should develop quality systems that:

- a) Establish the differences between existing approved quality systems and those appropriate to apprenticeship and address the gaps by establishing additional QA procedures, with QQI approval where required.
- b) Ensure staff are (and will continue to be) fully capable of imparting the education and training necessary to satisfy the intended programme learning outcomes. The programme itself should explicitly identify the qualifications and experience required of staff who will be responsible for the education and training in the apprenticeship programme.
- c) Ensure there are quality systems to maintain an effective relationship between participating employers and the collaborating off-the-job providers in the matter of curriculum relevance, assessment integration, data communication and apprentice mentoring and support.
- d) Ensure management and administrative systems can deal effectively with the organisational and communication needs of the apprenticeship programme.

### 3.7.11 Progression pathways

In developing the apprenticeship programme, specific attention should be given to progression and transfer pathways. It is an essential characteristic of the programme that it be situated within the constellation of NFQ programmes with arrangements for transfer both into and out of the programme. The following are among the matters to be considered:

- a) Transfer into the programme from cognate programmes, leading to awards at similar or higher NFQ levels, and the extent to which the possibility of transfer with advanced standing might apply.
- b) Progression into the programme from cognate programmes leading to awards at lower NFQ levels.
- c) Transfer or progression from the programme into cognate programmes leading to awards at similar or higher NFQ levels.

### 3.7.12 Brand image, occupation and award naming

The Review of Apprenticeship report (December 2013) indicated that apprenticeships must offer a formally structured and sustained period of learning leading to a national qualification which equips the learner for a sustainable and durable occupation (p 93). This differentiates apprenticeships from in-company training and from generalised education programmes.

The end result of an apprentice's training should be the ability to practise the occupation autonomously.

One consequence is that the occupation, in its general sense, should have a stable long-term brand image in the public mind and the minds of employers. Examples of existing occupations which fit this concept are Electrician, Plumber, Accountant, Nurse etc. While each of these occupations has specialised employment options, the public understanding is of a generalised brand image occupation.

Keys to establishing such public understanding and stability for apprenticeship occupations are the use of occupational titles (which are themselves both explanatory and stable and which describe the general occupation) as well as stability of recruitment and employment in the chosen occupation. This does not limit flexibility or evolution of the occupation as the external environment changes with time.

In this respect, the Coordinating Provider, in making a validation application (or validating), should ensure the programme name and its associated award promotes a stable long-term occupational brand image.

## 4 GUIDELINES: OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME STAGE

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### 4.1 Occupational memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding

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Any successful collaboration of a consortium of employers and providers involved in the provision of an apprenticeship programme will require a binding agreement between the **consortium** partners.

The responsibilities of the Coordinating Provider are broader than day-to-day programme management and delivery as it must also ensure it is continually informed of the evolving requirements of the occupation and the employers within it, to ensure continued relevance and national coverage. This monitoring might, for example, be accomplished through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

A sample Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is included in Appendix 1. It is possible that funding and regulatory authorities might suggest a template for a Memorandum of Agreement.

The purpose of a Memorandum of Agreement is to enable the consortium partners to work together to manage, deliver and develop the apprenticeship programme. To achieve this the Memorandum of Agreement should:

- Establish the separate responsibilities of partners and the authority to carry out these responsibilities.



- Designate the membership of the managing **Programme Board**, its terms of reference, structure and reporting arrangements.
- List the rights of ongoing review of training and work experience and access to relevant apprentice records.
- Describe the processes by which new members of the consortium can be agreed.
- Outline the periodic review processes and the access necessary to carry out such processes.

Besides the formal agreement, it will be necessary to have memoranda of understanding between the Coordinating Provider and individual collaborating providers. These memoranda should include:

- Establishing normal lines of communication between co-ordinating provider, training provider and employer, including contact details.
- Establishing protocols for the exchange of information and reports.
- Establishing protocols for external oversight of the providers' operations.
- Providing a mechanism for the resolution of difficulties with the programme or between providers.

## 4.2 Programme provision

QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines apply to providers' procedures for the provision of apprenticeship programmes.

### 4.2.1 Programme development and approval

Programmes have two broad purposes. They should ensure that at the conclusion of the programme, the qualified apprentice is fully qualified to perform the full range of activities and responsibilities outlined in the Occupational Profile. Those qualified should also have the skills to continue their learning as the occupation changes throughout their career. This requires the achievement of the **intended programme learning outcomes** and includes the ability to learn effectively. Policies and procedures for programme design and approval should ensure that programmes:

- are designed with overall programme objectives and outcomes that are aligned with industry requirements and encompass the range of skills, competencies and knowledge;
- are aligned with the QQI **Professional Award-Type Descriptors** of the National Framework of Qualifications;
- are designed jointly by the Coordinating Provider and employers as a partnership;
- are designed to allow for national recruitment and for the smooth flow of apprentices between enterprises and educational institutions;
- are designed to facilitate professional and regulatory licensing, where applicable;

- are designed to facilitate transnational movement within an occupation, where feasible;
- are designed recognising the duality of the apprentice as employee and trainee;
- include well structured 'off-the-job' periods that integrate and strengthen the 'on-the-job' experience; and
- have a range of learning experiences to facilitate the further occupational development of the qualified apprentice.

#### 4.2.2 Apprentice recruitment, progression and recognition

Apprentice recruitment has a double purpose. The apprentice is employed to work for the enterprise. They are also being selected for a programme of training which may define their occupational status and career paths. Recruitment processes must ensure that the apprentice is likely to remain with the employer for the duration of the training, to fit in with the organisation and to have the capacity and temperament required for the occupation.

Where existing employees, whose prior learning is significantly less than the peer group, are being proposed for registration, any learning gaps should be identified and appropriate support offered.

In addition to the guidance provided by QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (CQAG), procedures for apprenticeship admission, progression and recognition, should also include:

- mechanisms to ensure the continued suitability of the apprentice to the training programme and the employment regime;
- mechanisms to recognise particular aptitude for the occupation that may compensate for lack of formal prior qualifications;
- provision of supportive access programmes to address specific skill or competency deficiencies where apprentices meet the eligibility requirement but lack qualifications which are normal for their group;
- socialisation procedures to establish the status of the apprentice within the enterprise and among their peers in the community of practice;
- tools to track apprentices as they progress through the programme;
- appropriate recognition procedures including any occupational certification to facilitate employment and career mobility.

#### 4.2.3 Programme monitoring and review

An apprenticeship programme is delivered within both the enterprises and occupations for which they are in preparation, and by the off-the-job training/ educational providers. Apprenticeship programme monitoring must ensure that the learning opportunities allow the apprentice to reach the objectives of the programme in both arenas.

#### 4.2.3.1 *Ongoing monitoring and reviewing of delivery*

One particular aspect of apprenticeship programmes is that multiple providers and possibly multiple sites are involved. This requires that each element (e.g. stage or phase) dovetails with the following element (stage or phase). This will require processes to ensure that each provider has full information on the ongoing learning achievements of the apprentices. The contribution of authorised officers acting on behalf of the statutory regulator is another important component in this regard.

Monitoring should also utilise the rich connections between practices and programmes to ensure continuing fitness for purpose. In addition to the general requirements of CQAG, monitoring should:

- ensure that the experience of each individual apprentice fulfils the requirements of the programme by monitoring and recording work-based activity and the corresponding achievement towards programme goals and that these are available to subsequent providers;
- ensure that the delivery of on-the-job and off-the-job elements at multiple sites are, as far as possible, equivalent—this would prevent excessive spread of activities with a consequent loss of focus and quality;
- ensure that there are no excessive delays in progression by apprentices to off-the-job elements;
- allow for changing techniques and technologies as they come into practice;
- establish clear lines of responsibility for apprentice (learner) observation and supervision; and
- provide secure and timely feedback processes for apprentices, employers and providers.

The provider of ‘on-the-job’ elements (the employer) is responsible for apprentice direction, observation and supervision. The off-the-job provider is responsible for the off-the-job educational and training elements of the programme. The Coordinating Provider is responsible for oversight of both of these. This should be specified formally in the programme management proposals and overseen by the Coordinating Provider and evaluated by the Programme Board.

#### 4.2.3.2 *Addressing deficiencies in delivery*

Deficiencies in delivery of on-the-job experiences occur when employers have different sets of regular activities that may not always cover all of the learning experiences required by a programme. This can be avoided or minimised by rigorous vetting procedures applied by the statutory regulator, in consultation with the Coordinating Provider, when employers are admitted to the programme. Where an employer’s business does not provide some elements of training:

- A formal arrangement with another employer should be made to address this deficiency in advance of the commencement of the apprenticeship.

It is also the case that some experiences may not be available at the appropriate time for individual apprentices due to changing business circumstances. In this case, employers or/and co-ordinating providers should:

- replace the experience with one that achieves the same outcome; or
- arrange for the apprentice to gain the experience with another suitable employer; or
- allow for sufficient flexibility in the taught elements to compensate for some deficiencies in the 'on-the-job' experience of particular apprentices.

#### **4.2.3.3 Addressing disruption in apprenticeship**

Disruptions to an apprentice's engagement in an apprenticeship programme can take place for a variety of reasons. These include a possible breakdown, where there is a breakdown in the relationship between the apprentice and the employer; where the apprentice has a justifiable complaint that he or she is not receiving adequate training; where, for personal reasons, an apprentice must leave an employer; or where an apprentice becomes redundant. In these circumstances, the statutory regulator, in conjunction with the Coordinating Provider, will endeavour to provide alternative accommodation for the apprentice. Solutions in this regard may include:

- placing the apprentice with another suitable employer;
- providing the apprentice with a complete record of his/her learning to date;
- facilitating and supporting the transfer of apprentices between employers where this is necessary.

#### **4.2.4 Staffing**

##### **4.2.4.1 Staffing in the employer's enterprise**

While it is recognised that apprentice training is not the primary purpose of an enterprise, it may form a key component of strategic manpower planning for the employer. However, if an enterprise wishes to train apprentices, some consideration of appropriate staffing is necessary. In particular, participating enterprises, in complying with the statutory regulator and in accordance with effective quality assurance measures, should be required to designate staff who:

- manage the recruitment and initial orientation of apprentices;
- have sufficient professional expertise and authority to allow for mentoring of apprentices;

- have mentoring training;
- act as liaison with the off-the-job providers in delivering the programme;
- have an agreed set of responsibilities with respect to apprentices;
- have, where appropriate, the skills necessary to assess apprentice progress and to confirm the achievement of learning outcomes;
- are the designated reporting contact to the Coordinating Provider;
- consider establishing benchmark trainer/apprentice ratios.

#### 4.2.4.2 *Staffing in the educational/training institution*

Within the educational institutions, the staffing arrangements should conform to the requirements of CQAG. In addition to their normal institutional activities, staff allocated to apprentice training duties should:

- have opportunities to relate to professional practice and, where appropriate, remain registered practitioners;
- be conversant with the 'on-the-job' experience of the apprentices and capable of actively integrating that experience into their teaching;
- liaise with employers and apprentices.

### 4.2.5 Teaching and learning

#### 4.2.5.1 *Teaching and learning – supporting the individual learner*

In addition to the requirements of CQAG, it should be recognised that for much of the time, many apprentices progress through an individual sequence of learning experiences without the company of a cohort of peers. Where necessary, employers should ensure that the deficiency in peer support is made up by mentoring. The Coordinating Provider and the employer should ensure that:

- detailed information is provided to the apprentice on the sequence of learning actions;
- individualised support is provided to the apprentice especially in the early stages of the programme;
- detailed instruction is given to the apprentice on how they can demonstrate learning achievement;
- systems should also be evolved to allow and require apprentice feedback on the progress of their training to the appropriate provider.

#### 4.2.5.2 *Teaching and learning - maintaining the community of practice*

The **community of practice** is an element of apprentice training that is critical to the successful formation of a professional in any arena. The generally accepted behaviour of peers will strongly influence the performance of apprentices. Besides technical know-how, the community of practice passes on the values and culture associated with an occupation. They can also act as unofficial or designated mentors for the apprentice. The community of practice not only extends within the enterprise, but also beyond it, as a recognised occupational community. Providers should be mindful that the quality of the community of practice must be maintained by:

- ensuring that the apprentice is recognised as a member of the community of practice;
- giving the apprentice access to his/her peers and other members of the community of practice in the enterprise;
- facilitating informal learning and socialisation between community members;
- ensuring access to broader community and occupational learning resources;
- providing mentoring to the apprentice by an experienced practitioner;
- valuing, in the workplace, the experience of learning.

#### 4.2.5.3 *Teaching and learning - ensuring equivalence of provision*

Apprentice programmes will have a minimum of two locations, an enterprise and a provider of off-the-job education or training (normally an educational/training institution). In most cases, it will involve many enterprises and possibly multiple educational/training institutions. Where the structures of programme provision are complex, problems of equivalence and maintenance of quality can arise. These problems can be inherent, depending on the variable capabilities of providers. They can also arise on account of changing resources or opportunities available to the apprentice. Varying levels of competence or commitment within the peer group may also affect the 'on-the-job' experience.

To counteract this, the Coordinating Provider, in conjunction with the statutory regulator, must ensure that there are procedures in place to:

- check the facilities in enterprises and educational institutions;
- monitor the progress of the apprentices;
- facilitate the transfer of apprentices for particular experiences;
- support the training of workplace mentors;

- ensure that diagnostic assessment is available before the end of a particular phase of training—where the apprentice has failed to achieve the outcomes within the workplace, they should be apprised of the fact and, as far as possible, given the opportunity to achieve the specified outcome;
- provide mechanisms by which trainers and mentors in different organisations can exchange experiences and develop and recognise best practice;
- establish MOAs or MOUs with each collaborating provider to facilitate the above.

#### 4.2.5.4 *Teaching and learning - maintaining the curriculum*

Apprenticeship programmes, by their nature, are delivered within the context of the **target occupation**. Changes within enterprises occur more rapidly and out of phase with changes within academic institutions. These changes may be driven by large-scale market changes. They may also arise owing to technological advances, changing techniques and best practices. Organisational changes can affect the envelope of occupational responsibilities and finally regulatory changes may require the acquisition of new knowledge, skill or competency. Some of these factors may be local to a particular enterprise.

The nature of an apprenticeship is that the qualified apprentice, on graduating, is immediately capable of performing all of the activities required by the occupation. This should happen without the necessity of further learning. Programme design and management must be responsive enough to allow for changes in the Occupational Profile to be included in the curriculum, where appropriate. This should be achieved without the necessity of rewriting full documentation or requiring a new validation. To achieve this, it will be necessary that:

- programme documentation (i.e. what is approved at validation) is not overly detailed and unduly prescriptive, with an emphasis on outcomes and educational and assessment strategy rather than detailed elaboration of learning materials;
- staff are empowered to consider the most appropriate way of achieving outcomes and varying content accordingly;
- assessment and examinations may change between curriculum reviews to reflect updated work practices and content;
- the Coordinating Provider or the Programme Board has the competence or the facility to monitor changes in the occupation; this might, for example, be facilitated through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2;
- mechanisms are put in place to disseminate innovations in the curriculum;

- there are regular meetings of the Programme Board to prevent too wide a disparity in experience arising.

## 4.3 Assessment of apprentice achievement

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### 4.3.1 General comments

Assessment is one of the most important elements of apprentice training. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on an apprentice's employment opportunities and career options. The right of an institution or an individual to assess an apprentice carries with it very serious responsibilities. This responsibility extends to preserving the value of previous assessments for previous cohorts of apprentices. Poor or inconsistent assessment damages the quality of all awards made by the provider. Mentors and teachers cannot function purely as trainers and advocates for their apprentices; they must also make judgements. Any assessor making a judgement on an apprentice must be competent to do so. This may involve assessment training and independent oversight of assessments. All of the guidelines of CQAG apply fully to apprenticeship programmes.

### 4.3.2 Assessment on-the-job

Assessment 'on-the-job' faces particular challenges. These include some, or all, of the following: long periods of individual learning outside the formal learning environment; the individual work experiences of particular apprentices; the measurement of real outcomes in the workplace rather than simulated ones in the academy; periodic and brief observation sessions of the apprentice; disjunction between elements and sites; and the level of expertise available in the workplace. Employers and the community of practice have a key strategic interest in the effectiveness of on-the-job assessment.

Assessment of 'on-the-job' achievement should have the following characteristics:

- A continuous record of experience and assessment should be maintained for each apprentice. This record should also contain the apprentice's reflections on their experience. It should be confirmed by the workplace mentor and accessible by the other examiners;
- Provision should be made for the external observation of the apprentice;
- The apprentice should have access to timely sources of feedback on assessment and support for dealing with deficiencies;
- The assessment schedule and regime should be flexible enough to deal with differing workplace situations and adaptive to changing circumstances.
- There should be periodic face-to-face observation of the experience and achievements of the apprentice.



### 4.3.3 Assessment off-the-job

Assessment of 'off-the-job' achievement may take place at different sites where the programme has been delivered with some variations. Assessment 'off-the-job' should have the following characteristics:

- Identical assessment regime at each site overseen by the Coordinating Provider (format of examination, length etc.);
- Consistent range and level of assessment across each site;
- Sufficient flexibility in topics to allow for delivery differences at each site and for local examiner input, where appropriate;
- Where deficiencies in the 'on-the-job' experience have been remedied by an 'off-the-job' input, the relevant outcomes should be assessed.

### 4.3.4 Final assessment of competency

The final assessment of apprentices must ensure that they are immediately capable of performing the activities and carrying out the responsibilities normal to the occupation. This assessment should be:

- holistic in that it measures the general competency of the candidate.
- final in that success should mean the entitlement to an award and to registration in the occupation where this is an intended outcome of the programme.

### 4.3.5 Assessing the assessment

Assessing the assessment is an important element of any QA system. In a distributed apprenticeship training system, it presents particular issues of relevance, equivalence and quality of judgement. These can be dealt with by peer review of assessment and by a second reading of some examination material. Periodic reviews by outside independent assessors are also necessary to ensure that:

- the overall standard is maintained.
- no systematic differences arise between locations.
- assessment material remains relevant.
- the impact of apprenticeship disruption on assessment has been evaluated.

## 4.4 Managing and maintaining quality in apprenticeship programmes

Apprenticeship programmes pose particular challenges in maintaining quality. They have a strong occupational focus which may, from time to time, require recalibration of outcomes and processes. This may require occupational scans, strong feedback and input from employers and those involved in the occupation.

They are employer-led which can lead to changing demand patterns. This might require continual input to ensure that new providers can maintain the quality of the programme. Any management system must take into account the position of the various providers and awarding agencies or institutions. There may be one employer or many. There may be one 'off-the-job' provider or many. The 'off-the-job' provider may be an awarding body. In all these cases, it is necessary that the management of the programme is not compromised by the complexity of the structure.

Incidentally, an employer or an entity created by a group of employers, which may not be providing any other programmes, may become a Coordinating Provider. This may require that quality responsibilities, normally carried out by extensive institutions with experienced staff, are carried out by a smaller group with less experience or resources. For example, to become a relevant provider, an entity would, among other things, need to take on the responsibilities outlined in *Quality Assurance Guidelines and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards 2013*.

The responsibilities of the management and promotion of quality can be considered at three levels. These are, the broad context within which the programme is delivered, the strategic management of quality and, finally, the operational level that ensures that quality is delivered on a day-to-day basis. The management structure must be able to address all of these levels.

#### 4.4.1 Producing a quality environment

Producing a quality environment will ensure that the standards of the programme and the interests of the stakeholders, the employers, the apprentices and the broader occupational group, are maintained. This can be achieved by having an efficient and effective organisational structure that can implement quality systems, react to external inputs and is transparent in its operations. It should also be a reflective structure capable of internal reform. Such an organisation would have the following characteristics:

- Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities, lines of communication and reporting supported by agreed memoranda of understanding, where necessary.
- Induction processes for new providers and support for new mentors, lecturers and managers.
- Promotion of a collegiate approach that recognises equality of esteem between different providers.

#### 4.4.2 Strategic management of quality – ensuring continued relevance and increased quality

The strategic management of the quality assurance system involves the maintenance of that system. This, in turn, requires an ongoing evaluation as to whether the system is being implemented as established and to determine if elements need to be updated. The scope of possible changes should also be specified with clear boundaries, at establishment.

It requires active benchmarking of the programme against best practice elsewhere. It should have the ability to obtain timely reports on implementation and the ability to react to those reports.

Strategic management also requires continual assessment and re-assessment of the needs of the stakeholders and the evolution of the skills, knowledge and competences required within the occupation. This requires strong and rich connections with the community of practice and an awareness of changes elsewhere in the world. The structures necessary to carry out strategic management would have the following characteristics:

- Involvement of major stakeholders and providers meeting regularly with agreed terms of reference, agenda and minutes.
- Sufficient authority agreed by all providers to ensure compliance with QA systems.
- Sufficient internal competence and expertise to propose and if necessary implement changes to quality systems.
- Clear communication and reporting links with operational management.
- Be sufficiently embedded in the provision of the programme to act as an energising force rather than a purely controlling one.
- Should include members who have rich connections to or involvement with the occupation.
- Observe agreed processes to admit new providers to the organisation.
- Maintain open feedback processes from learners independently of the local employer.

#### 4.4.3 Programme operation – implementing quality in a dynamic environment

The fragmented nature of the delivery process within apprenticeship programmes produces issues that must be dealt with by those involved with the direct delivery or management of the programme; these include the statutory regulator and the Coordinating Provider. Those involved with 'on-the-job' elements must be required to handle the individual recruitment and orientation of apprentices, ensure that the apprentice is functioning as a learner and as a valued member of the workforce, deal with external observations of the workplace experience, maintain records and liaise with 'off-the-job' management. They should also actively promote up-to-date techniques for inclusion in the programme.

The off-the-job provider must ensure that material delivered meets the needs of apprentices coming from work experiences which may be divergent. They may work in isolation requiring formal communication with peers. They may have to liaise with other off-the-job providers to ensure that elements delivered in different sites remain aligned.

Quality implementation will require providers to:

- have clear instructions as to their responsibilities and competence, and authority to carry them out.
- have an awareness of the whole programme and their position within it.
- have sufficient expertise to direct apprentices and to propose variations in the delivery process.

- have access to their peers and the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation and development of the programme.

#### 4.4.4 Day-to-day management of the programme

##### 4.4.4.1 Programme director/administrator

A programme director/administrator should be appointed by the Coordinating Provider to manage the programme, to administer or oversee the administration of the programme and to ensure communications with partners. The programme director is the point of contact for all providers for the programme. They organise the programme and examination boards. They report to the awarding body and to the Programme Board. They deal with individual apprentice issues. They assist employers in the registration of apprentices. They organise the registration of the apprentices with the awarding body. They assist in the admission of new members into the consortium. They are the contact point for apprentices with individual or group concerns.

##### 4.4.4.2 The Programme Board functions

The Programme Board is the entity responsible for the ongoing oversight of the programme. It should have access to data on the delivery of the programmes, the current assessment results and the flow of apprentices between elements of the programme. It should receive all process reports from collaborating providers and from independent examiners. It should also be aware of changes in the circumstances of the collaborating providers and in the occupation. Its functions include:

- The general oversight of the delivery of the programme and of the assessments.
- Responding to inputs from external examiners.
- Responding to inputs from the providers and from the occupation.
- Sanctioning changes to delivery and minor changes to the programme within the bounds set by the validation.
- Organising surveys of apprentices and responding to these.
- Providing secure feedback mechanisms for apprentices.
- Reporting to the Coordinating Provider's academic council or equivalent on its activities, as required by the awarding body.
- Reporting on its activities to the partners as required.
- Taking the lead in the programmatic review in preparation for revalidation.
- In an expanded form it functions as an examination board.

#### 4.4.4.3 *Membership of the Programme Board*

The size of Programme Boards may vary depending on the range of providers involved in the consortium and the distribution of sites at which the programme is delivered. It should consist of a minimum of four elements: the Programme Director, and representatives of employers of the educational/training providers and of apprentices. Representatives of other stakeholders such as occupational associations could be included where appropriate. The chair could be one of the employers and the organisation of the Programme Board should be the responsibility of the Programme Director.

- The Programme Director, besides organising the board, should act as a contact point for the Programme Board and the providers and should report to the consortium and the awarding body, if not a member.
- The members from the training/educational providers should function as experts rather than as representatives of their providers. At the same time, they should inform themselves of issues arising in their areas and be capable of arguing for changes in the programme.
- The members from the employers should be occupational experts and/or active mentors. They should be capable of representing the broad interests of the occupation. They should also have the capacity to bring provider concerns to the board.

#### 4.4.4.4 *The examination board*

The size and membership of the examination board depends on the range of providers involved in the consortium and the distribution of sites at which the programme is delivered. It must be capable of dealing authoritatively with the assessment results presented to it. It should operate according to the rules of the awarding body. It should have available to it sufficient expertise to allow it to operate within those rules.

- It should have members drawn from the examiners, at least one from each educational/training provider and sufficient to deal with all modules and sites.
- Employers could be represented by their Programme Board members, with additional persons representing significant examining expertise, if necessary.
- External examiners, where they confirm results, should be members.
- The chairman of the Programme Board and the programme director should be members, ex-officio.

## 4.5 Periodic reviews of occupation, the consortium and the programme

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### 4.5.1 Purposes of periodic reviews

Periodic reviews are a standard form of long term quality assurance and quality enhancement processes. Periodic reviews are general reviews of the whole project and can be the precursor for major changes in the programme.

Apprenticeship programmes have three elements which require this thorough overhaul. These are the agreed **occupational profile**, the functioning of the **consortium**, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the **programme** itself.

The timing of the reviews can depend on a number of factors. Awarding bodies normally require five year reviews of programmes. Funding bodies may require reviews at the end of funding periods. The pace of changes in the occupation may also determine the need for changes. The maximum review period should be set when the programme is initially validated.

Characteristics of periodic reviews:

- They are thorough reviews that can justify major changes in the programme.
- They consist of a self-evaluation process and an external independent review.
- All three elements can affect each other and therefore reviews are best carried out at the same time.

The three reviews can be carried out separately, but it should be recognised that each report can influence the outcomes of the others.

The programme review report for revalidation by QQI (where applicable) should incorporate the relevant outcomes of the other reports. To avoid unnecessary duplication, the three reports could be presented as one report with three distinct elements.

### 4.5.2 Reviewing the occupational profile

The purpose of any apprenticeship is to prepare apprentices for the occupation. Ultimately, the quality of the apprenticeship depends on how the qualified apprentice performs in the occupation. As occupations change, the knowledge, skills and competences required, also change. A thorough review of the requirements of the occupational profile is necessary before any review of the programme is carried out. Revised occupational profiles will be subject to approval by the relevant national apprenticeship body or bodies, prior to the revision and revalidation of a programme. A review of an occupation would have the following characteristics:

- Involvement of employers' associations or of significant employers;
- Engagement with human resource personnel from across the industry to assess functioning of qualified apprentices;

- A survey of any literature, conference proceedings, or regulatory material pertaining to the occupation, including economic and labour market forecasts and analyses;
- Involvement of significant occupational professionals;
- A review of technological changes that might impact on the occupation;
- A survey of past graduates to identify strengths and weakness of the programme and level of preparation for career advancement.

This review might, for example, be accomplished through the involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

The outcome of the occupational profile review should indicate necessary and desirable changes to the programme. It is the process through which employers and occupational members can have influential input into the apprenticeship. It is a vital input into the review of the programme. It should be circulated to stakeholders and form the context for a programmatic review.

#### 4.5.3 Reviewing the partnerships

The Programme Board and agreements with collaborating providers and employers (the consortium) are among the mechanisms by which the Coordinating Provider ensures the delivery of the programmes.

The Coordinating Provider may also be the conduit by which funds are dispersed. Alternatively, this conduit might, for example, be a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

The review of the consortium should deal with the following issues:

- The responsibilities of individual providers including the Coordinating Provider.
- The relationships between providers, employers, the statutory regulator and its authorised officers.
- The effectiveness of the reporting procedures.
- The communication links between the partners.
- Corporate governance arrangements (this would include a Consortium Steering Group (Appendix 2) should there be one).
- Operation of safeguards against academic/financial impropriety, recklessness or negligence.
- Any necessary changes to the consortium agreement.

#### 4.5.4 Reviewing the programme

Programmatic reviews are a normal part of academic quality assurance. The format of programmatic reviews should comply with the requirements of the awarding body.

Reviews of apprenticeship programmes will have necessary input from the review of the Occupational Profile and partnership reviews. In reviewing the effectiveness of the programme the review should:

- take into account the input from the Occupational Profile review to ensure continued relevance of all aspects of the programme;
- use input from mentors, trainers, graduates and current apprentices to modify the curriculum, modules and assessment processes;
- review reports from external assessors to ensure suggested changes are implemented;
- establish the levels of mentoring, training and assessment skills available to the programme and the currency of physical facilities;
- assess whether or not the entry requirements remain appropriate.

The efficiency of the programme can be assessed by:

- taking into account the input from the partnership review to modify delivery arrangements;
- looking at retention, withdrawal and graduation rates and causes across the full period of the review;
- ensuring that there are no persistent anomalies at particular sites or with particular modules or other elements of the programme;
- using input from mentors, trainers, graduates and current apprentices, to modify the delivery process and the operational management procedures.

The output from this review should be a programme proposal with updated intended programme learning outcomes suitable for the changing occupational profile, changed partnerships, changed module outcomes and changed content, to reflect updated occupational concerns and a more efficient delivery of the programme. The review should be carried out in a way that affirms the positive roles of participants and re-energises the consortium.



#### 4.5.5 Other reviews

A Coordinating Provider delivering apprenticeship programmes may be required to report, periodically, to the statutory regulator, the Apprenticeship Council, occupational bodies and/or funding bodies. The partnership agreements should facilitate any such reports.

## 5 SUPPORTS FOR APPRENTICES

### 5.1 General issues

Apprentice learners may require particular types of support. Support is required at induction, to ease the change in life status of the new apprentice, as is indicated in the recruitment section above.

As an employee, the apprentice may find that continuity of the employment, or the suitability of the employment, may be at risk. Systems need to reduce the impact of these risks, as indicated earlier. It should be noted that the Coordinating Provider and its partners, cannot and should not guarantee it will find suitable employment for redundant apprentices, in all cases.

The learning supports required for the apprentice were outlined in earlier sections and should include personal and career support. It is particularly important for young apprentices to be integrated into their community of practice, as early as possible.

Membership of a stable community is a significant part of the personal socialisation process for all persons. To that end, where there are multiple off-the-job providers, apprentices should, as far as possible, attend one such provider for all releases, thus maintaining continuity of community, easing integration, and improving learning efficiency by familiarity with library, IT and other institutional systems.

### 5.2 Duty of care to young apprentices

Some apprentices may be under eighteen years of age. In these cases, the provider should exercise the appropriate duty of care. This is particularly important when young apprentices are away from home during 'off-the-job' phases.

### 5.3 Integration into off-the-job institutions

Where the off-the-job provider is a large educational/training institution, it is important that apprentice learners be fully integrated into the social, sporting and support systems of the institution as soon as possible, due to the concentrated nature of off-the-job phases. These institutions should also ensure that this support and integration is maintained during the on-the-job phases (for example: library access, IT system access, sport facilities access and such like).

Off-the-job phases may commence at varying times during the academic year and this presents a particular challenge as many activities of institutions are founded on full time attendance. Institutions should take particular cognisance of this and develop mitigating policies, such as the maintenance of access and communication during the on-the-job phases mentioned above.

#### **5.4 Dealing with competing responsibilities**

Part-time or mature apprentices may have more family commitments than full-time students. Their employments may require them to move temporarily around the country. These potential disruptions should be allowed for and support provided where possible.

#### **5.5 Special educational and training needs or disabilities**

Apprentices may also present with special educational or training needs or disabilities. The employer should share this information with the Coordinating Provider from the outset. Providers should make reasonable accommodations to ensure, as far as possible, that those with disabilities do not face undue barriers in successfully completing apprenticeships.

#### **5.6 Complaints**

Clear mechanisms should be established for apprentices to make complaints against their education and training providers, their employers or about the lack of integration of their programme between these parties.

### **6 INFORMATION PROVISION**

#### **6.1 Management information and data**

It is likely that the Coordinating provider will be required to transfer data regarding the apprenticeship programme and apprentices, to other parties. Whilst data is a matter that is addressed in the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, the quality assurance of data in this context may require particular attention on the part of the Coordinating Provider.

#### **6.2 Public information**

It is a standard requirement that specific information on any programme leading to an NFQ award is publically available. Partnership agreements must ensure that providers are aware of this and cooperate with it.

It is particularly important that the “brand image” of apprenticeship, as a mode of learning, appropriate to all higher NFQ levels above Level 4, be developed and encouraged and that the public understands the progression opportunities and nature of work-based learning. Therefore, public information should support the positioning of apprenticeship in this context.

The Coordinating Provider is responsible for ensuring that new apprentices are fully aware of the programme. As apprentices may enter singly into apprenticeship without the support of a cohort or contact with more advanced peers, it is particularly important that the information delivered to the new apprentice is complete and is supported by briefings by the workplace mentor, which cover the full programme on which he/she has engaged.

The Coordinating Provider, along with the programme partnership, is the body within the occupation most directly responsible for programme quality. It should seek to promote quality in the occupation among apprentices and also amongst those qualified.



## 7 APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix 1: Guidelines on the drafting of Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding

#### 7.1.1 Memoranda of Agreement (MOA)

The Memorandum of Agreement should assure that 'on-the-job' and 'off-the-job' training provision and associated services are provided in a streamlined manner and in compliance with QQI QA guidelines, awarding body requirements and the policies of the statutory regulator, funding bodies and with other parties with legitimate requirements.

#### 7.1.2 General arrangements

- a) establish and specify the partnership/consortium (indicating the partners, including identifying the Coordinating Provider and the designated address for communication);
- b) ensure that processes are in place by which partners might leave the partnership and new partners might be admitted;
- c) ensure that the rights and obligations of all partners are clear;
- d) agree terms of MOA and MOU between Coordinating Provider and other partners;
- e) ensure that the nature of the services to be performed by each partner is clear;
- f) specify the scope of the agreement and the relevant programme and the award that it will lead to and the awarding body;
- g) establish the period of the agreement;
- h) establish the conditions under which the agreement will be reviewed and under which it will be renewed;
- i) provide for the amendment of the agreement;
- j) ensure that the entities (normally the Coordinating Provider and employers of apprentices) that learners can hold legally liable for any deficiencies in the provision of education and training, are made clear;
- k) specify any limitations on liability and provide for mutual indemnification;
- l) provide for the resolution of disputes arising in respect of the agreement;
- m) provide for the termination or suspension of the agreement (setting out the conditions under which this can be done) having regard for learners concerned;
- n) ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the protection of apprentices and in all cases for residual obligations to learners on termination of the agreement;

- o)* ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the protection of apprentices in cases where an individual partner cannot fulfil its obligations;
- p)* name the jurisdiction within which the agreement is enacted and should be interpreted;
- q)* ensure that a process is in place for addressing disputes in respect of the agreement, including any perceived breaches of the agreement and grievances by learners and involved employees;
- r)* oblige partners to participate in the programme review/accreditation/validation process required by the apprenticeship awarding body and to comply with any conditions that are attached to review/accreditation/validation;
- s)* establish quality assurance procedures for the programme and require partners to cooperate and participate in the quality assurance procedures and in related quality evaluations, whether internal or externally organised, while ensuring that quality assurance procedures applying to the collaborative programme are recognised as meeting the requirements of the awarding body;
- t)* provide for the apprenticeship awarding bodies to monitor the quality and standards of the programme and associated services;
- u)* collect and maintain the information required by external quality assurance agencies or for national or European agencies such as the Europass Diploma Supplement;
- v)* require that partners encourage and make provision for cooperation between their staff in respect of the programme.

### **7.1.3 Financial arrangements (subject to the terms and conditions of the relevant funding body)**

- w)* specify the entity, normally the Coordinating Provider, that is accountable for the funds disbursed to the consortium;
- x)* state financial arrangements that
  - i)* address the distribution of any funds allocated to the programme;
  - ii)* assure each partner's capacity to account for income and expenditure involving the consortium;
  - iii)* meet all legal requirements in all of the involved jurisdictions;
  - iv)* make adequate provision for protection for learners as described under paragraphs m) and n).

## 7.2 Appendix 2: Consortium Steering Group Example

### 7.2.1 A Consortium Steering Group (CSG)

The Consortium Steering Group comprises all of the apprenticeship programme's key stakeholders including employers, occupational associations, any occupational regulators and the Coordinating Provider.

The role of the CSG is to ensure that the apprenticeship programme conforms to, and evolves with, the requirements of the occupation. Its purpose is to ensure that the apprenticeship programme is enterprise-led and meets labour market needs. This requires that programme graduates fit the autonomous occupational role assigned to them. The CSG acts as the 'guardian' of the occupation, performing the critical role, in conjunction with the statutory regulator, of coordinating employers involved in the programme. It should also act to bring together the employers, the Coordinating Provider and the other providers who are involved in the programme.

In conjunction with the statutory regulator, the CSG should ensure that the critical element of 'on-the-job' training is maintained and delivered at the appropriate standard with the specified learning outcomes and that it is implemented effectively by employers and by the Coordinating Provider.

It acts as a liaison between employers and the Coordinating Provider at a broad level. Where necessary it will deal with and report to the statutory regulator, the relevant funding body and QQI, and where appropriate with occupational bodies.

It will act with the Coordinating Provider in a spirit of partnership. In its operation it will respect the statutory autonomy of the Coordinating Provider, its responsibilities to maintain academic standards and to deliver programmes as agreed with the validating authority. The CSG will interact closely with the coordinating and other providers' academic programme boards and management, to ensure a holistic administrative and educational structure and delivery, creating a seamless unified on- and off-the-job learning experience for the apprentice learner.

### 7.2.2 The composition of the Consortium Steering Group

The composition of the Consortium Steering Group will depend on the range of the occupation and the nature of the enterprises that are involved in the occupation. The composition should have the following characteristics:

- a) It will be chaired by a person of authority from an enterprise or the community of practice involved in the occupation.
- b) It will have a majority of persons from enterprises, or employers' associations, or the community of practice, or relevant professional bodies.
- c) The enterprise members will be representative of the range of enterprises involved. Where enterprises employing apprentices include large and small employers there should be appropriate representational balance between the SME sector and the larger enterprises.

- d) The Coordinating Provider and other off-the-job providers will be members of the CSG.
- e) The Coordinating Provider should normally provide the secretariat for the CSG although this arrangement could be varied if necessary.

### 7.2.3 The role of the Consortium Steering Group

The Consortium Steering Group (CSG) will:

- a) Ensure, with the Coordinating Provider, adequate consultation with stakeholders in the development, delivery and review of the programme.
- b) Develop systems that ensure that employers and labour market trends influence and lead curriculum development, while providing for learners' personal development and their preparation for progression.
- c) Respond to regional and national actual and forecast demand for the programme to ensure that it is demand driven rather than supply driven, taking into account funding and supply constraints.
- d) Ensure that potential apprentices, the public and employers have accurate information on the programmes and on the occupation.
- e) Support and develop the marketing of the occupational profile.
- f) Support career guidance initiatives and the development of the apprenticeship "brand".
- g) Develop, in consultation and agreement with providers, employers and other relevant stakeholders such as occupational bodies, and in accordance with national norms, binding memoranda of understanding or memoranda of agreement which commit all parties to a process of implementation of the agreements.
- h) Coordinate with the statutory regulator and employers to ensure (i) that recruitment of apprentices takes into account the knowledge, skill and competence necessary to complete the programme (ii) the effective and efficient training of apprentices within the workplace.
- i) Seek to ensure that recruitment and delivery arrangements adequately support equity and inclusion of underrepresented societal groups on programmes and provide appropriate learning support for these groups.
- j) Ensure there is a system in place to evaluate and review employer training capacity and to liaise with the Coordinating Provider in order to address any gaps in that capacity.
- k) Liaise, as requested, with the statutory regulator and its authorised officers in exercising its statutory authority to approve new employers who wish to recruit and train apprentices, and to remove employers who are deemed no longer to have the capacity to provide sufficient training to enable achievement of the programme learning outcomes.



- l)* Ensure that there are systems in place for smoothing surges and collapses in occupational recruitment and for responding to redundancy of individual apprentices.
- m)* Ensure that there is a system in place to allow orderly expansion of provision which can add employers and collaborating providers of education and training.
- n)* Organise periodic occupational reviews and ensure that the findings are taken into account in subsequent reviews of the programme.
- o)* Organise periodic reviews of the operation of the CSG itself and its membership and ensure that the findings are taken into account in the development of the CSG and the governance of the programme.
- p)* Ensure that the development and operation of apprenticeship provision for the occupation conforms to principles of good governance and to the processes, systems and requirements of the statutory regulator, the funding bodies, the education and training institutions, the occupational body, QQI and any other relevant parties.

Depending on the resources available to it, the CSG may arrange for some of the roles above be carried out by the Coordinating Provider.







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