



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

# Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan 2021



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## Introduction

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is committed to providing a quality service to its customers. Based on the [12 Principles of Quality Customer Service](#), this Customer Action Plan (action plan) sets out the aims and actions that we will strive to achieve in order to provide a quality service to its customers.

Our Customer Charter is based on this action plan and lays out a summary of the commitments and standards of service customers can expect from us. These commitments are continually monitored and measured to determine customer satisfaction and to highlight areas for improvement.

The purpose of this action plan is to demonstrate how we will deliver and assess our progress on the commitments set out in the Customer Charter. The Customer Action Plan should be read in conjunction with the Customer Charter and the [12 Principles of Quality Customer Service](#).

## About Us

QQI was established in 2012 as an independent state agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland. We do this in several ways, including:

- promoting, maintaining and developing the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), a 10-level framework for the development, recognition and awarding of qualifications in Ireland.
- approving programmes offered at a variety of schools, colleges and further and higher education and training institutions. These programmes lead to qualifications QQI awards listed in the NFQ, which are recognised internationally.
- regulating and promoting the quality of programmes offered by schools and colleges leading to qualifications in the NFQ for the benefit of learners, employers and other interested parties.
- ensuring that providers offering national qualifications provide a positive, high-quality experience to international learners coming to study in Ireland. We will do this by authorising the International Education Mark (IEM).
- providing academic advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland through a service called NARIC Ireland – the National Academic Recognition Information Centre. We also provide advice on the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad.
- informing the public about quality assured education and training programmes and qualifications through a database of programmes and a register of providers.
- managing a national scheme for the quality assurance of English language services (Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services - ACELS).
- advising the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science about national policy on quality assurance and improvement in education and training.

## Our Vision And Mission

This [Statement of Strategy 2019-2021 Adding value to qualifications](#) sets out our vision and mission statement. We are committed to working enthusiastically and purposefully towards a vision of Ireland that offers extensive high-quality education and training opportunities, enabling learners to fulfil their potential through achieving qualifications that are widely valued nationally and internationally.

Our mission is to sustain public confidence in the quality of education and training, promote trust in the National Framework of Qualifications and drive a culture of continuous improvement by education and training providers.

As an organisation, we aim to uphold the values of:

- **Shared responsibility**- with others to ensure confidence in and continuous improvement of the quality of education and training.
- **Collaborative effort**- We believe that the attainment of our goals and objectives is best pursued collaboratively and constructively with our diverse set of partners and providers.
- **Objectivity and transparency**- This underpins our decision-making and our policies, procedures and activities.
- **Achievement and Impact**- We are committed to making a difference to our partners, providers and our people. We value the successful pursuit of goals and objectives which culminate in impacting positively and substantively on our operating environment.
- **Learning and Innovation**- We are committed to learning and innovation in our organisation to continuously improve our services.

## Our Customers

External Customers: We have a wide range of external customers and are committed to providing a quality service to meet their needs. Our customers include:

- Government departments.
- Other government agencies/offices.
- Stakeholders from outside the public service including education and training providers, employers, learners, professional bodies, foreign awarding bodies, international peer agencies and other representative bodies.

Internal Customers: We recognise staff as our internal customer and are committed to supporting staff in delivering business services.

## Quality Customer Service

We are fully committed to providing the highest levels of service to all our customers in accordance with the [12 Principles of Quality Customer Service](#).

### 1. Publish a Quality Service Statement

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which the customer can expect and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

Our commitment:

- Publish our Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan on our website in both Irish and English and make it available in print on request.
- Circulate the charter and action to all our staff.
- Provide relevant staff members with customer service training.

### 2. Equality/Diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation and accommodate diversity, to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community). Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

Our commitment:

- Ensure equal service delivery to all our customers and will strive to ensure no one is discriminated against.
- Adhere to the principles as defined by employment equality and equal status legislation. We promote staff awareness of equality and diversity through dissemination of policy and procedural information, publishing information on the staff intranet and training as required.
- Work with individual customers to ensure that their information needs are met, in the most appropriate way.
- Ensure that the needs of staff and visitors with disabilities are identified and fully catered for.
- Provide our staff with the latest guidance on equality, diversity, harassment and bullying.
- Monitor compliance with the employment targets under part 5 of the Disability Act 2005.

### 3. Physical Access

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

Our commitment:

- Ensure offices, buildings and accommodation are maintained to an acceptable standard, complying with health, safety and accessibility standards.
- Establish roles of Health and Safety Officer, Access Officer/Disability Liaison Officer, Fire Wardens and trained first aid personnel and commit to annual training or more frequently, as required. Our Health and Safety Statement is available on request.
- The Access/Disability Liaison Officer can be contacted at [disabilityliaisonofficer@qqi.ie](mailto:disabilityliaisonofficer@qqi.ie) and is available to ensure that any issues in relation to physical access can be addressed without delay.

#### 4. Information

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

Our commitment:

- Provide information, which is clear, timely, accurate, relevant and fully accessible to our customers. We do this through our staff, our publications and on our website.
- Comply with freedom of information and data protection legislation. Contact details for our Freedom of Information and Data Protection Officers are on our website.
- Ensure that our website is kept up to date and reviewed regularly.
- Ensure that information is made available in as many formats upon request, where possible.
- Continue to adopt a 'plain English' approach to publications, particularly those intended for general information.
- Ensure that the [QQI website](#) conforms to high standards of user friendliness and accessibility.

#### 5. Timeliness and Courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Provide contact details in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

Our commitment:

- Ensure that all customers are treated with courtesy and that all enquiries are dealt with efficiently.
- Ensure that statutory requirements in relation to responding to freedom of information and data protection requests are met.
- Aim to continue to reduce the number of late payments.
- Ensure that all staff provide their names and business area when answering telephone calls.

- Ensure that voicemail messages are up to date and that all voicemail messages are responded to within 1 working day of receipt.
- Ensure that full contact details are provided on all our written or e-mail communications.

## 6. Complaints

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

Our commitment:

- Ensure that all complaints are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- Ensure that all complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.
- Ensure that all complaints are investigated fully and that a reply to your complaint is issued within 15 working days. Where this is not possible, an interim reply will be given, explaining the reason for the delay and advising when a substantive response will issue.

## 7. Appeals

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Our commitment:

- Ensure that customers are aware of the options available to them when they are dissatisfied with a decision made in relation to requests under freedom of information and data protection legislation.
- Offer an appeal process to customers dissatisfied with our services. Customers can also appeal to a Senior Manager if dissatisfied.

## 8. Consultation and Evaluation

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

Our commitment:

- Consult with stakeholders in relation to the effectiveness of our services and use customer feedback to improve services and address areas of concern.
- Seek feedback from service users via customer consultation survey.
- Consult with our stakeholder groups on all significant policy initiatives.
- Actively seek feedback from internal and external stakeholders to better understand their needs. Act on feedback received when services are being reviewed.

## 9. Choice

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

Our commitment:

- Provide choice of options to access services by including contact by telephone, email, social media or via our website. The website is updated regularly, and social media are monitored regularly.
- Make full use of new and emerging technologies to broaden the choice of services available to customers.

## 10. Official Languages Equality

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Our commitment:

- Publish our Annual Report in both Irish and English.
- Ensure that every effort is made to cater for callers who wish to be dealt with through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through either of the official languages.
- Identify Irish language ambassadors in the workplace who can make themselves available to liaise with customers in Irish as requested.

## 11. Better Co-ordination

Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

Our commitment:

- Strengthen communication and consultation with stakeholders to ensure optimal delivery of services.
- Implement the public service reform programme, [Our Public Service 2020](#).
- Engage with other relevant bodies across the statutory and voluntary sector.



## 12. Internal Customer

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted regarding service delivery issues.

Our commitment:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the functions and responsibilities of other business units in the organisation and kept up to date with all new developments.
- Maintain a supportive working environment for our staff, which encourages and supports the right to dignity at work.
- Develop and encourage open communication amongst all staff to promote a healthy and equal working environment in an organisation that values the contribution of each individual.
- Acknowledge the personal needs of staff and provide support in an appropriate, fair and sensitive manner.
- Develop an internal communications protocol.
- Promote awareness of the Code of Business Conduct.
- Provide for the training and development needs of each staff member through the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

## What To Expect When You Contact Us

We aim to give you the best possible service by:

- Treating customers fairly, impartially and with courtesy and respect. This applies to all methods of communication.
- Ensuring that rights to equal treatment are upheld in the delivery of our services.
- Accommodating any special needs our customers may have.
- Respecting the confidentiality of any personal information you provide to us and only using it in accordance with the law.
- Providing services through English and Irish (when requested).
- Monitoring and reporting our performance annually.

### **When you contact us by letter, email or social media**

- We aim to acknowledge all correspondence within 3 working days.
- We will keep you informed of progress and will send you detailed correspondence within 15 working days.
- If this is not possible, we will write to explaining the reason for the delay and tell you when you can expect a full reply.
- All correspondence from us will be in clear and plain language.

### **When you contact us by phone**

- Our reception telephone will be open from 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

- Calls will be answered as quickly as possible and transferred to a member of staff who can help you.
- All staff will give their name and unit when answering your call.
- We will keep our voicemail messages up to date.
- We will respond to voicemail messages within 1 working day.
- We will try to answer your query in full. If this is not possible, we will respond as soon as possible and keep you updated.

### **When you visit our public offices**

- We will be helpful, professional, and courteous. We ask that you afford our staff the same consideration.
- Ensure our reception is staffed.
- Our meeting facilities will be accessible and comply with health and safety standards.
- We will facilitate access for people with disabilities and people with other specific requirements.

### **Providing information**

- We aim to provide clear, accurate, accessible, relevant and up-to-date information.
- We will provide this information through our staff, our publications and our website.
- We will ensure that important public information material is available in a variety of accessible formats.
- We will maintain our website as an accessible comprehensive source of information on all aspects of our work.

### Measuring And Evaluating Our Performance

We employ a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in our Customer Charter, to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest levels of service.

In monitoring our performance, we will:

- Develop baseline data on our service delivery performance.
- Seek feedback and suggestions from our customers.
- Use internal management information systems to inform our customer service policies.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable health and safety standards and regulations.

### Training

We are fully committed to providing customer service training for all staff.

### Customer Complaints Procedure

We are fully committed to delivering the highest quality of service and equality of treatment to all our customers. If you are unhappy with the quality of service you have received, or the way our service was delivered to you, you have the right to complain to us.

## When Should You Complain To Us?

If you feel our standards of service have not met the commitments laid out in our Customer Charter, you have the right to complain to us.

***QQI's complaints procedure is not a mechanism for addressing individual learners' complaints or grievances. These should be addressed through the education provider's internal mechanisms.***

## How Do I Make A Complaint?

If you have a complaint, it should be directed initially to the relevant section. Our staff will try to deal with the problem without delay or, if the complaint does not relate to a service provided by us, direct you to the appropriate body.

If you do not know the name of the person in the section to contact, or if you are unsure which organisation, you should make your complaint to, our Customer Service officers will be happy to advise you. You can contact them through our [QHelp](#) system (you will need to register if you do not already have an account).

If the staff of the section cannot resolve your complaint, or you are unhappy with their response, you can ask for the matter to be reviewed by a senior member of staff from that section.

If you are still unhappy with the response, you should make a formal (written) complaint to the Director of Corporate Services who will investigate the complaint on your behalf.

You can do this online through [QHelp](#).

Alternatively, you can complain in writing to:

Director of Corporate Services,  
QQI,  
26-27 Denzille Lane,  
Dublin 2

### Office of the Ombudsman

If you feel you have been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint may contact the Office of the Ombudsman. By law, the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about any of our administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction in your dealings with us. However, the Ombudsman will normally expect the complaint to be first referred to QQI. The Ombudsman provides a free, impartial and independent dispute resolution service and may be contacted as follows:

Office of the Ombudsman  
18 Lower Leeson Street  
Dublin 2  
D02 HE97

### Statutory Obligations

In addition to undertakings given in our Customer Action Plan and Customer Charter, we believe it is important that all staff are aware of their statutory obligations. QQI is fully committed to fulfilling all relevant statutory obligations in relation to Data Protection, Equality, Freedom of Information, Prompt Payment of Accounts and Safety, Health & Welfare at Work.