



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

**Meeting Note**

**ELC Standards Advisory Group**

**Post Consultation Meeting #10**

**QQI Boardroom, Denzille Lane**

**15 October 2019**

**10.00 am – 2.30 pm**

**Attendees:** Deirdre Hanamy (Chair)  
Martina Carter, Department of Education and Skills  
Clodagh Beare, Adult Education Officer (Quality) DDLETB  
Phil Lynch, Early Childhood Ireland  
Martina Coombes, Technological University Dublin, Blanchardstown  
Evelyn Reilly, Service Representative  
Mary Sheehy, FESS  
Jenny Whelan, FESS  
Ann McSorley, Scottish Social Services Council  
Rita Melia, Tusla  
Peter Cullen, QQI  
Walter Balfe QQI

**Apologies:** Kathryn O’Riordan, DCYA  
Ann Fanning, Cork College of Commerce, Cork ETB

**Present:** Paula Gaffney, QQI

Item	
1	<p>The Chairperson welcomed all present, in particular, Rita Melia from Tusla, who was invited to join the meeting by the QQI executive.</p> <p>Apologies were noted and a round of introductions took place.</p> <p>The Chairperson informed the group that Madeleine’s contract had ended prior to this meeting. The Group expressed its gratitude for Madeline’s contribution.</p> <p>The Chairperson gave a brief overview of what had been accomplished following the previous meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The consultation drafts were published on 9 April for consultation until 30 September 2019.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A well-attended ELC consultation workshop event on draft ELC standards was held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked the group members (including all previous members) for their participation and commitment to the project so far, and acknowledged the work done to develop the draft ELC awards standards and associated material.</p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion on consultation feedback</b></p> <p>The Group was provided with the consultation responses in electronic form along with a thematic analysis summarising the issues raised.</p> <p>Paula Gaffney had prepared a thematic analysis of the feedback. Issues raised in the feedback were grouped under five thematic clusters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Special Validation Conditions</li> <li>– Annotations to the PATDs</li> <li>– Deactivation</li> <li>– Shared curriculum concept</li> <li>– Other</li> </ul> <p>The analysis reported the numbers of occurrences of a range of issues raised, grouped under the five broad headings.</p> <p>The QQI executive acknowledged the level of engagement by stakeholders on the issues and noted the quality of the feedback, which was constructive and rich in content.</p> <p>Peter led the group’s discussion on consultation feedback. He acknowledged the thematic analysis and used it to frame the Group’s detailed consideration of the feedback under its five headings.</p>
<p><b>2.a</b></p>	<p><b>Special Validation Conditions</b></p> <p>Issues raised included: The impact of the increase in the professional practice placement hours to 150; the constraints on the minimum number of hours for the different age groups sub-bands within the 0-6 band; availability of placements; logistics for monitoring and supervising practices placements; the impact of the increased workload on providers; impact on part-time learners (this arises under several headings).</p> <p>The Group noted that it is important that providers appreciate and acknowledge that staff time must be allocated to securing and supporting placements.</p> <p>The Group suggested that continuing professional development should be provided to support the relevant staff in areas such as leadership, management and dealing with placement providers.</p> <p>The Group stressed the importance of ensuring the quality of placements. Its noted that Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) Inspection reports are available online and should be consulted before selecting placement</p>

	<p>providers and as part of monitoring the continuing suitability of a placement providers.</p> <p>The Group amended the Special Validation Conditions to include a requirement that there be a Code of Practice for Professional Placement. This would define criteria and guidelines for selecting practice placements and for the management and implementation of practice placements. It would address the roles and responsibilities of providers of education and training; students and providers of practice placements.</p> <p>It was suggested that FET providers might be able to access some of the material that is currently developed for ELC placements in programmes of higher education and training.</p> <p>The Group noted that new regulation is expected for childminding and it might have implications for ELC programmes.</p> <p>Following consideration of the feedback, the Group agreed amendments to the Special Validation Conditions including the following significant changes:</p> <p><i>3.0 Professional Practice placements will be integral to the programme. Programme providers will maintain an appropriate code of practice for providers of professional ELC practice placement and associated procedures and criteria. Code of practice will apply to all aspects of the professional placements.</i></p> <p><i>3.1 The programme will ensure that each (fulltime) learner completes 150 hours of professional practice placement (per annum) in a minimum of two ELC settings: (1) working directly with children aged between 0 and 2 yrs. 8 mts. and (2) working with children 2 yrs. 8 mts. - 6 years; with an appropriate balance between settings.</i></p>
<p><b>2.b</b></p>	<p><b>Annotations to the PATDs</b></p> <p>Overall the feedback on the annotated PATDs for ELC was positive.</p> <p>The Group reviewed all responses and made minor amendments to the annotations. Among these it added a footnote to the “Purpose Section” to clarify that meaning of the word “care” in the ELC context includes meeting a child’s basic needs.</p> <p>The Group added a reference to Tusla’s “Registration of School Age Childcare Services” to the section entitled: “List of Resources for Early Learning and Care Award”. It noted that this section would need to be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.</p> <p>The Group amended the annotation referring to ‘emergent language’ to ‘emergent languages’ recognising that some learners may be multilingual.</p>

	<p>Group members agreed to review the resources section in advance of the draft standards being finalised for the QQI Policies and Standards Committee meeting.</p>
<p><b>2.c</b></p>	<p><b>Deactivation</b></p> <p>Issues raised included: implications of the deactivation timeline for part-time learners; capacity of providers to develop the new programmes in the timeline envisaged; implications of deactivating the School Age Childcare minor;</p> <p>The Group discussed the feedback on the proposed timeline and agreed that, while challenging, it is achievable for fulltime programmes.</p> <p>The Group decided to change its proposed timeline for part-time programmes as follows: the last enrolment date for part-time learners would be January 2021 and the deactivation date for awards for part-time learner would be extended to June 2022.</p> <p>The Group suggested that programme designers carefully consider how to provide a pathway for holders of the Early Childhood Care and Education award (Code 5M2009) to the new ELC award at Level 6.</p> <p>The Group recommended that the School Age Childcare minor 5N1718 be retained pending the development of a new award in this area. It also recommended that QQI consider developing a special-purpose award for School Age Childcare before deactivating this minor.</p> <p>The Group recalled that it did not propose that the Special Needs Assisting award be deactivated at this time. It also recommended that QQI consider developing a special-purpose award relating to special/additional needs.</p>
<p><b>2.d</b></p>	<p><b>Single Sharable Curriculum Concept</b></p> <p>Issues raised included: the concept was strongly welcomed but there are many questions e.g.: How might it be implemented? How might it be led? How might it be made fair, transparent and inclusive? There was also a question about grading conventions for the new awards.</p> <p>The QQI executive clarified that there would be no change to existing grading conventions (namely Pass, Merit and Distinction) as a result of the proposed new ELC standards.</p> <p>The QQI executive recognised the novelty of the single sharable curriculum concept and indicated that QQI would help providers by arranging one or more facilitating workshops to stimulate networking and discussion, as soon as possible after the adoption of the new standards.</p> <p>The Group welcomed that QQI is planning to support facilitating workshops in the knowledge that implementation solutions must come from the sector.</p>

	<p>The Group noted that the sharable curriculum could be developed and owned by a consortium of organisations. It noted that transparency would be the key to the success of the single sharable curriculum concept.</p> <p>The Group agreed that a consortium might be a way forward – sooner rather than later.</p>
<b>2.e</b>	<p><b>Other Comments</b> The Group noted and considered the feedback.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Summary of the Recommendations for the PSC</b></p> <p>The Group recommended the following documents (when finalised as per 4) for adoption by the Policy and Standards Committee meeting at its next meeting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ELC awards to be deactivated and implications for validation (as amended following consultation);</li> <li>2. Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 to 8: Annotated for QQI ELC Awards (as amended following consultation);</li> </ol> <p>The Group recommend the development of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A special-purpose award for School Age Childcare</li> <li>b) A special-purpose award for Special Needs Assisting</li> <li>c) School Age Childcare minor 5N1718 be retained pending the development of a new award in this area.</li> <li>d) Provision for part-time programmes as follows: the last enrolment date for part-time learners would be January 2021 and the deactivation date for awards for part-time learner would be extended to June 2022.</li> </ol>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Confirmation of the recommendations</b></p> <p>The QQI executive will circulate the following to the Group for any finalising amendments by 25 October 2019:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ELC awards to be deactivated and implications for validation (as amended following consultation);</li> <li>2. Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 to 8: Annotated for QQI ELC Awards (as amended following consultation);</li> </ol>
<b>5</b>	<p>The Chairperson once again thanked the group for all their valuable time, expertise and commitment to the project to date.</p> <p>The QQI executive advised that it is thinking of inviting members of the Group to remain on as an advisory group during the implementation phase.</p> <p>Meeting ended.</p>

**Additional actions:**

- Thematic analysis of feedback to be published along with the written submissions from stakeholders (where permission granted)
- The note of this meeting will, along with the thematic analysis, be the basis for QQI's response to the stakeholder feedback.