

ETB Representatives, FESS and ETBI Consultation on: White Paper – Topic-Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines .. For Blended Learning	
Date	12/10/2017
Time	11am
Venue	ETBI Pipers Hill Nass
Attendees:	John Hogan (CDETB) Michael Murphy (MSLETB) Fiona Fay (DDLETB) Clodagh Beare (DDLETB) Nuala Glanton (Cork ETB) Siobhan Magner (ETBI) Jenny Conroy (ETBI) Finola Butler (FESS) Mary Sheehy (FESS)

Context

After discussion took place at the ETBI QA forum meeting in September, an ETBI facilitated focus group (representation listed above) was welcomed and convened to discuss QQI's white paper on: Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning and collectively provide feedback.

The discussion outcomes below may also be in addition to individual ETB responses received directly by QQI.

The focus group considered the draft [Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning](#) and earlier [Feedback](#) received during the first consultation which as noted by QQI had raised many issues around the context of online learning experiences.

These were also considered in the wider context of the [Core Policies and Criteria for Validation](#) and as they are intended, a supplement to [the Core Statutory QA Guidelines](#).

While we would have very much welcomed a QQI representative in the earlier part of the session to give an overview, this could not be facilitated due to timing and pre-arranged work commitments. It is kindly noted however QQI's response to the request and offer of any future support on this or any other consultation pieces in the future.

Observations

1.	<p>There are several observations made by the group which we document below for further consideration by QQI:</p> <p><i>The Guidelines for Blended Learning do not seem to address pure online Learning</i></p> <p>This may be answered in the fact that much of the feedback QQI received on the earlier versions of these guidelines has prompted the development of a green paper on Online learning, the focus of which is to capture this feedback received which is more appropriate to looking at issues relating to pure online learning from a much broader perspective. We welcome this paper for review.</p>
2.	<p>After discussion, the focus group felt that there was some requirement for clarity around the definition of blended learning, for the definition to specifically address what it is and</p>

	<p>what it isn't. It was felt that the current definition is too broad and could potentially capture various forms of teaching and learning.</p>
3.	<p>It was noted that there appears to be a lot of repetition both in content and requirements when accompanied by the Core Policies and Criteria for Validation and the Core Statutory QA Guidelines such as Programme context learner experience, reliability of assessment evidence, types of assessment activities, approval and validation processes (S4.3)...</p> <p>As it is intended as a supplementary document we would suggest that a short document specific to Blended Learning would be more appropriate, without repetition but with reference to other QQI policies and guidelines? And for this to be the suggested format for the green paper on Pure Online Learning also?</p>
4.	<p>It appears that much of the reference and source material used to inform the development of this set of guidelines is from the HE sector and not FE. The focus group noted that there may be some very valuable research material European wide for blended learning in an FE context and is it a shame that these were not consulted also.</p>
5.	<p>It is considered that 3.3.2 “enable close collaboration between ...” may be wrongly positioned within the document and that section 3.2 Infrastructure and resources may be more appropriate. Alternatively the procedures within this context could be placed within a supplementary page to the Core Policies and Criteria for Validation which already aims to address infrastructure, resources and published expectations on everything including Blended Learning where applicable.</p> <p>What are the core concerns for Blended Learning that differ from the above, what must we be addressing for Blended Learning only, what infrastructure specifically to Blended Learning and technology enhanced? The concern again is the requirement for repetition seems to be presenting itself across multiple documents.</p>
6.	<p>Regarding the development of an ETB's QA policies/procedures, it is not the intention of the ETB's to write independent QA policies/procedures for Blended Learning but to incorporate overall while therefore addressing the entire Programme development, validation requirements and conditions of teaching learning and assessment including online pure and blended.</p>
7.	<p>The focus group questions also where other provision that is blended/other awarding bodies is accounted for/referenced within these guidelines such as City and Guilds, Cisco.</p>
8.	<p>Use of “Examples Include” “for example” Should some be prescriptive not just examples, suggestion: 3.1.2 regarding policies, regulations and process being fit for purpose in the context of blended learning.</p>
9.	<p>Under S1.1 “To whom do these guidelines apply” there appears to be no reference to ETBs or recognised schools – the “obligatory” provider.</p> <p>Also within this section, a reference is made to “programmes” as being <u>on the NFQ</u> – should this not read “programmes leading to awards” <u>on the NFQ</u></p>
	<p>END</p>