



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Further Education and Training Awards

Report of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

Stage 1

Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1 Details of applicant provider and its proposed education and training provision

1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	GMB College Ltd.
Address:	14 Upper Mount St. Dublin 2
Date of Application:	17 February 2015
Date of evaluation:	12 March 2015
Date of site visit (if applicable):	25 March 2015
Date of recommendation to the Approvals and Reviews Committee:	27 April 2015



1.2 Profile of applicant provider

GMB (General, Municipal and Boilermakers) is a trade union operating in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The union traces its core activities back to 1889. GMB Trade Union, in a previous incarnation as the Gas Workers Union, was responsible for inviting James Connolly to Ireland and promoting the start of the Trade Union Movement in Ireland.

GMB has more than 600,000 members and is the third largest union in the UK. According to the trade unions Financial Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2013, the union's membership in Ireland is less than 200 members. It is affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

One of GMB Trade Union's strategic objectives is to organise and grow its membership in a number of sectors including security, health services and childcare. In order to raise its profile in Ireland, and in keeping with the union's objectives to promote training and education, the union has purchased premises in Dublin and has set up a wholly-owned, Irish registered company, GMB College Ltd., to provide vocational education and training for the security, health services and childcare sectors in which the union is active. The college will support the objectives of the trade union by providing access to programmes leading to QQI awards to workers in these sectors. The college will also support workers through the provision of programmes directly related to trade union activity.

GMB College Ltd. will be funded by the trade union until such a time as it is self-financing. GMB Trade Union has provided a 'GMB Covenant' signed GMB Trade Union's Director of Finance confirming the union's commitment to funding GMB College Ltd. until it becomes financially self-sufficient. The business plan indicates that it has set a goal of 5 years for this to happen. The financial and other support provided by GMB Trade Union removes some commercial pressures from GMB College Ltd.

GMB Trade Union purchased 14 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2, in October 2014, as its location for the college and trade union offices. This building has been in educational use since the early 1940's and was most recently in use by the Dublin Institute of Technology.

The trustees of GMB Trade Union are the beneficial owners of GMB College Ltd. A Board of Management of no more than seven members acting in a non-executive voluntary capacity is responsible to the GMB Trade Union trustees for the governance



of the college. Representatives of the GMB Trade Union, individuals with experience in training delivery and educational oversight and the college Academic Director will be members of the Board of Management

GMB College Ltd. is a start-up operation and has delivered no education and training programmes to date. Since the purchase of the building in October 2014 and the establishment of GMB College Ltd. in December 2014, it has focussed on the preparation of an application for initial validation to QQI and the refurbishment of the building.

Organisation structure and staffing

GMB College Ltd. currently has employed 3 staff - an Academic Director (currently part time and transitioning to full time as the college commences operations), a full time Deputy Director, and an operations Manager, who is also the GMB Trade Union Branch Secretary.

The organisation chart (Annex 1) details the other roles that will be filled as the operations commence. GMB College propose to recruit permanent Programme Managers and a panel of qualified tutors to be contracted to deliver specific programmes.

In order to establish the college, a 'commencement team' has been put in place to support, recruit and mentor the staff. The team is made up of the three GMB College staff and five experienced tutors in areas relevant to the college's proposed provision. This team will remain in place until the recruitment of staff has been completed.

The college plans to have three departments:

Department 1 Industrial Relations and Business School

The focus of this department is on developing and delivering programmes that educate learners to work in Human Resources, Industrial Relations and the Trade Union Movement by offering relevant accredited awards. If the college is successful in getting its programmes validated by QQI, the college plans to seek access to and membership at the appropriate level for its graduates of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).



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Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

This department also plans to oversee a range of training workshops and breakfast briefings to employers.

Department 2 Workplace Training and Workshops

This department is focussed on the design and delivery of training workshops and the provision of programmes required to access employment in certain fields. Some programmes will be accredited e.g. level 5 Trade Union Studies, Level 4 Security Industry awards and some will be industry standard training i.e. Safe Pass, Manual Handling. Focused

This department will provide support services in English language and literacy support.

Department 3 Early Years and Social Care.

This department is focussed on the provision of accredited programmes in Early Years and Health Care at both Level 5 and Level 6. GMB College Ltd. has relationships with employers in these areas. This will facilitate work placements required as part of the programmes and which it is envisaged will result in full time employment for the learners who achieve the awards.

Related college activity

GMB College Ltd. is developing links with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) to provide literacy and numeracy support to learners. NALA will be provided with rent free accommodation in the college.

The college also intends to provide career guidance services to learners that will support each learner's career goals and/or further education and training plans.

Learner recruitment

The programmes offered by GMB College Ltd. will be open to all learners. There is no requirement for a learner to be a member of GMB Trade Union to access any programme.

1.3 Proposed education and training provision

The GMB College Ltd. initial application to QQI indicated its intentions to provide further education and training programmes leading to major and minor QQI awards at Levels 4



to 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The college proposed to offer eight major awards and a range of minor awards. In the discussions with the panel, GMB College Ltd. revised its proposed provision. It confirmed it is proposing to offer further education and training minor awards at NFQ Levels 4, 5 and 6 and five major awards at NFQ Levels 5 and 6.

The awards proposed are:

Level 4 Minor awards in

- Door Security Procedures 4N1114
- Work Place Safety 4N1124

Level 5 Minor awards in

- Occupational First Aid 5N1207
- Safety and Health at Work 5N1794
- Security Industry Procedures 5N1785
- Legal Practice and Procedures 5N1394
- Care provision and practice 5N1358

Level 5 Major awards in

- Trade Union Studies 5M5156
- Health Services Skills 5M3782
- Early Childhood Care and Education 5M2009

Level 6 Minor awards in

- Equality and Diversity Advocacy 6N3078
- Health and Safety Management Services 6N3149

Level 6 Major awards in

- Management 6M4587
- Early Childhood Care and Education 6M2007



The rationale provided by GMB College Ltd. for selecting these awards is to offer training to learners in sectors directly linked to areas where the GMB Trade Union is actively developing a presence among workers and employers.

As provision in Early Childhood Care and Education and in Security is regulated, highly competitive and evolving in the further education and training (FET) sector, GMB College Ltd. will be presented with challenges that require sound research and training need identification in relation to the proposed provision.

Part 2 The Quality and Capacity Panel Membership

Name	Role of Peer Reviewer	Organisation
Jack O’Herlihy	Chair	Works with a variety of educational institutions on an ongoing basis and is a visiting lecturer on Strategic Management
Keith Brumfitt	Quality Assurance in Further Education	Education and Training Consultant, EQAVET
Maresa Duignan	Quality Assurance in Further Education and Subject Matter and Quality Assurance Expertise	Early Years Specialist, Department of Education and Skills
Seamus Burke	Subject Matter Expertise	Head of Individual Licencing & Training, Private Security Authority

QQI Staff		
Colette Harrison	Secretary	Provider Recognition, QQI
Paul Brady	For site visit element	Provider Monitoring, QQI



Part 3 Findings of the Panel

3.1 Summary Findings

The Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel's (panel) role is to evaluate the capacity of GMB College Ltd. to provide quality education and training to learners in the context of the education and training provision it has proposed. Core to this consideration, the panel is required to evaluate the draft quality assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by GMB College Ltd.

The panel reviewed the documentation presented by GMB College Ltd. and documentation submitted by QQI. Annex 2 lists the documentation reviewed by the panel. The panel met staff and members of the commencement team of GMB College Ltd. in the offices of QQI and considered their responses made during the course of the evaluation meeting. Annex 3 lists the staff and members of the commencement team of GMB College Ltd. met during the evaluation process.

Following the evaluation meeting, the panel agreed that a site visit to GMB College Ltd. premises should be undertaken by the QQI executive to confirm that the college premises, facilities and resources detailed in the documentation and presentation to the panel are in place and suitable for the proposed education and training provision. The site visit took place on 25 March 2015. The QQI executive is able to confirm this was the case and that they were appropriate to GMB College Ltd.'s application and fit for purpose.

The panel is satisfied that GMB College Ltd. has demonstrated its capacity to provide quality education and training to learners leading to awards at Levels 4, 5 and 6 of the NFQ. However, this is dependent on the implementation of a comprehensive staffing plan.

The current expertise in its commencement team can support the design, development and delivery of some areas of the proposed provision. These are the Level 4 and Level 5 minor Security, Law and Health and Safety awards, Level 5 major award in Trade Union Studies and Level 6 minor awards in Equality and Diversity Advocacy and Health and Safety. As yet, GMB College Ltd. has not sourced the appropriate expertise to design and develop the proposed provision in Early Childcare and Education at Levels 5 and 6 and Level 5 Health Service Skills.



It is the panel's view that GMB College Ltd.'s proposed plan for programme validation indicated in its Business Plan requires revision to phase the application for validation and delivery of the proposed programmes in the following order: Level 4 and 5 minor awards in Security, Law and Health and Safety and the Level 5 major award in Trade Union Studies and Level 6 minor awards in Equality and Diversity Advocacy and Health and Safety. When programmes have been validated by QQI and delivery commenced in these areas, the application for validation of Early Childcare and Education at Levels 5 and 6 and Level 5 Health Service Skills and Level 6 Management should commence.

GMB College Ltd. has demonstrated, during its presentation to the panel, a full ownership and understanding of its own quality system. However, the panel advises that the understanding of QQI's specific requirements e.g. quality assuring learner assessment, for the implementation of quality assurance needs further attention by the GMB College Ltd. commencement team to ensure effective engagement with all QQI processes.

The panel is satisfied that the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by GMB College Ltd. demonstrates a potentially effective quality management system fit for the purposes of education and training as outlined above.

3.2 Recommendation of the panel to the Approvals and Review Committee

The panel recommends that the Approvals and Review Committee of QQI approves the proposed draft Quality Assurance procedures of GMB College Ltd. As a result of this recommendation GMB College Ltd. will be permitted to progress to Stage 2 of the initial validation process. This is subject to QQI confirming that the conditions imposed by the panel in this report are met by GMB College Ltd. prior to submitting programmes for validation.



Part 4 Detailed findings - Evaluation of the capacity of GMB College Ltd. to provide quality education and training to learners

4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

4.1.1(a) Criterion

Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?

4.1.1(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. is a limited company incorporated on 17 December 2014 (CRO 554565). It is owned by GMB Trade Union (GMB) and resourced by it. It has five named directors, two are employed by the college and three are senior GMB Trade Union personnel. Its principal function is the provision of education and training.

4.1.2(a) Criterion

Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?

4.1.2(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. is a legal entity established in Ireland. The college will only operate in Ireland.

4.1.3(a) Criterion

Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?

4.1.3(b) Finding

The relationship with GMB is well documented and transparent. It is clear that the college will have a financial dependency on GMB given its commitment to fund the college until it is self-financing. The panel is satisfied that the college's documented governance structure ensures that GMB cannot exercise undue influence on the academic management of the college.

**4.1.4(a) Criterion**

Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?

4.1.4(b) Finding

This is not applicable to GMB College Ltd. as this stage of its development.

4.1.5(a) Criterion

Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?

4.1.5(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd., in making the required statutory declaration has certified that it is in compliance with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements applicable to the provision of education and training in Ireland, in particular all employment, health and safety, equality, data protection, and financial regulatory requirements insofar as same are applicable to GMB College Ltd.'s operations. The Academic Director's professional background and extensive experience in legal compliance requirements is a further assurance of the college's capacity to meet all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements as the college commences operations

4.1.6(a) Criterion

Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.

4.1.6(b) Finding

This is not applicable to GMB College Ltd. as it is a start-up operation and is not an education or training provider in any other jurisdiction. The college made the strategic decision to apply to QQI for initial validation of its programmes. If successful, this will be its first relationship with an awarding body or quality assurance agency. GMB College Ltd. has sought to establish the relationship with QQI at an early stage in its development in order to ensure that it implements a quality assurance system that meets the benchmark standards of an awarding body.



4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:

4.2.1(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?

4.2.1(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. is wholly owned by the GMB Trade Union. The establishment of a college is part of the union's strategic plan to develop and expand its activities in Ireland. GMB has committed to funding all college activities until such time as it is self-financing. There is no time limit to the financial support that GMB has committed. However, it is the college's ambition that it will be self-financing in 5 years. GMB College Ltd. has access to GMB Trade Union's infrastructure and resources such IT, operations and administrative supports.

GMB College Ltd. submitted a wide range of documentation confirming the investment and ongoing support of GMB. The panel is assured by this documentation and the GMB Covenant signed the Finance Director of GMB Trade Union that sufficient resources has been committed by GMB. This assurance confirms the stability and good financial standing of the college.

4.2.2(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?

4.2.2(b) Finding

Clear evidence was presented by GMB College Ltd. about the planning and rationale for focusing on the awards it has proposed. The college acknowledged the competitive environment it is entering. The college has provided detail of anticipated learner numbers and proposed fees for each programme it is offering, together with details of staff and tutor salaries. However the panel, in reviewing the proposed programme fees, is concerned that some of the fees proposed do not reflect the current market realities, demand for places and were significantly higher than the state funding available to learners to undertake programmes required for employment. This is a particular issue for the costing of the Early Childhood Care and Education programmes. The planned numbers of learners on some



programmes i.e. the programmes leading to security award are also considered ambitious given the oversupply of provision in this area.

Assurances were provided by GMB College Ltd., during its presentation that learner numbers and programme fees will not impact on its capacity to offer sustainable provision. The commitment of GMB to support the operation of the college is unconditional and seen as key to the strategic development of the union in Ireland. This committed support removes the normal commercial pressures faced by start-up operations from GMB College Ltd.

The current range of expertise available to the college needs to be strengthened to enable the college achieve its strategic and business aims. It is the panel's view that GMB College Ltd.'s proposed plan for programme validation indicated in its Business Plan requires revision to phase the validation and delivery of the proposed programmes in the following order: Level 4 and Level 5 minor awards in Security, Law, Health and Safety and the Level 5 major award in Trade Union Studies and Level 6 minor awards Equality and Diversity Advocacy and Health and Safety.

When programmes have been validated by QQI and delivery commenced in these areas, the validation of Early Childcare and Education at Levels 5 and 6 and Level 5 Health Service Skills and Level 6 Management should commence.

4.2.3(a) Criterion

Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?

4.2.3(b) Finding

The trustees of GMB Trade Union are the beneficial owners of GMB College Ltd. A Board of Management of no more than seven members acting in a non-executive voluntary capacity is responsible to the GMB Trade Union trustees for the governance of the college. Representatives of the GMB Trade Union and the college Academic Director will be members of the Board of Management. The Academic Director is the Chief Executive Officer of the college and is responsible to the board of management for the efficient and proper management of the college.



GMB College Ltd. has not fully implemented its planned governance and decision-making structure. The proposed governance structure seems capable of ensuring effective management and decision-making.

4.2.4(a) Criterion

Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?

4.2.4(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. has appropriate arrangements in place to provide the required information to QQI and will be the responsibility of the Academic Director. Administrative support will be provided through the planned recruitment process. The learner management system which is currently in development by the IT department of GMB will strengthen the college's capacity to fulfil this criterion.

4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:**4.3.1(a) Criterion**

Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?

4.3.1(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. is a start-up operation and has no track record as a provider of further education and training. To address this criterion the college has established a 'commencement team' of experienced individuals with experience in the delivery of education and training with a range of providers. This team includes the three staff members of GMB College Ltd. - Academic Director, Deputy Director and Operations Manager and four qualified and experienced tutors. All have experience in delivering further and higher education and training programmes leading to awards at Level 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The panel noted a need for development and strengthening of the commencement team in terms of its knowledge and understanding of the qualifications system: awards, learning outcomes, programme design, development and internal approval of programmes. The experience of being wholly responsible for implementing a large comprehensive quality



assurance system is identified as an ongoing area for resourcing and development by GMB College Ltd.

4.3.2(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?

4.3.2(b) Finding

On the date of the evaluation, GMB College Ltd. has employed three staff. The Academic Director and Operations Manager are currently part time employees. The college indicated, at the panel presentation that, as its activities increase the Academic Director will transition to full time employment with the college. The Deputy Director is employed full time. The Operations Manager combines this role with the role of GMB Trade Union branch secretary. The college has provided the panel with details of its recruitment plans to staff the college with suitably qualified and experienced staff and confirmed these at its meeting with the panel.

The panel acknowledges that this is a reasonable approach for a start-up operation. However the requirement to have appropriate staff in place to manage and support the proposed quality assurance system is an essential pre-requisite for successful programme validation.

GMB College Ltd. is required to review the proposed recruitment methodology, selection criteria, role profiles and proposed contract terms. This is to ensure that the staff recruited has sufficient knowledge and experience together with clarity of role and responsibility in order to be able to fully implement the college's proposed quality assurance system and to successfully move to the next stage of programme validation.

4.3.3(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with the standard conditions for validation specified in Section 45(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (the Act)?

4.3.3(b) Finding

The standard conditions for validation specified in the Act include co-operation with and assistance to QQI in the performances of its functions,



including the provision of such information required by QQI, the establishment of procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners and provisions for the protection of enrolled learners. From the documentation submitted and the presentation made by GMB College Ltd. the panel considers that its quality assurance system is capable of supporting the standard conditions for validation. This determination will be made during the programme validation stage of this process.

4.3.4(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?

4.3.4(b) Finding

GMB Trade Union purchased, in October 2014 the building GMB College Ltd. operates from. It also houses the offices of the Irish branch of the GMB Trade Union. A site visit undertaken by QQI executive confirms the information provided by GMB College Ltd. in its submission and during the evaluation meeting. The building and facilities are fit for purpose.

4.3.5(a) Criterion

Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?

4.3.5(b) Finding

The access transfer and progression arrangements in place meet QQI criteria and are appropriate for the college's proposed provision.

There is no requirement for learners accessing the programmes offered by the college to join the GMB Trade Union.

**4.3.6(a) Criterion**

Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?

4.3.6(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. demonstrated at the panel presentation an understanding of the structures and resources necessary to have in place to ensure fairness and consistency in learner assessment.

The panel has identified a structural weakness in the role of Programme Managers as ‘Internal Moderators’ and the relationship with tutors as ‘Internal Assessors’. There is significant potential for a conflict between line management responsibilities, expert knowledge and academic management responsibilities to arise between Programme Managers and tutors. This conflict could damage the outcomes for learners.

The roles proposed for the ‘Internal Moderator’ and the responsibilities of the ‘External Examiner’ needs to be clarified. For example it is indicated that the External Examiner ‘oversees the duties of the Programme Manager in their guise as internal moderator...’ This is not an appropriate role for an External Examiner.

The college needs to further develop its understanding of the FET authentication process including internal verification and external authentication and results approval as set out in the FET Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines (Revised 2013). The challenge of ensuring consistency of approach to assessment across the tutors employed to deliver programmes has been identified by GMB College Ltd. and it has proposed an approach to addressing this challenge i.e. 25% figure for monitoring assessment outcomes. The consistent and comprehensive implementation of the FET assessment guidelines will address this issue in more detail.

**4.3.7(a) Criterion**

Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?

4.3.7(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. understands its statutory responsibilities for protecting enrolled learners. It has provided a 'letter of comfort' from GMB, confirming that all learner fees will be refunded in the event of a programme not being provided. The college intends to establish appropriate academic arrangements with alternate providers to meet its obligations for the protection of enrolled learners.

4.4 Evaluation of capacity to provide the proposed education and training provision Overall finding:

The panel is satisfied that GMB College Ltd. has proven its capacity to provide quality programmes leading to the proposed NFQ Level 4 to NFQ Level 6 major and minor awards in security, trade union studies, childcare, healthcare and management to learners, in an adequately resourced, suitable environment, subject to meeting the conditions at part 6 of this report.



Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by GMB College Ltd.

5.1(a) Criterion

GMB College Ltd.'s policies are required to demonstrate a full knowledge of legislative obligations on providers arising from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012).

5.1(b) Finding

The draft QA procedures submitted by GMB College Ltd. demonstrate its understanding of all the legislative obligations on providers who offer programmes leading to QQI awards. The panel was satisfied that the Academic Director of the college, in the course of the panel meeting, demonstrated an understanding of the legislative obligations of the 2012 Act and the consequences of not fulfilling these obligations.

5.2(a) Criterion

The system for Internal/Self-Monitoring is credible i.e. it identifies

- *who is responsible*
- *mode(s) of operation*
- *frequency*
- *indicator(s)/measures of effectiveness*

5.2(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. as a small organisation requires its staff to undertake a number of roles, which is understandable.

The panel is of the view that GMB College Ltd.'s QA procedures for internal/self-review and monitoring require further thinking and refinement. The model of QA as presented is designed based on the higher education guidelines and associated criteria. Given that the college is providing further education and training programmes a reorientation of QA is likely to result in a more appropriate and practical set of procedures to support the college's proposed provision.

The proposed Academic Quality Council structures for internal review and coordination are extensive and should be revisited. Some of the activities



could be better allocated to Programme Managers as they should be seen as part of the day to day operational activities of a coordinator. The council will then take on a role of higher level review and planning

There is scope for expanding the knowledge and experience of key personnel in relation to implementation of quality assurance, particularly in regards to internal monitoring and review. It is likely that support and mentoring will be needed in the initial years of programme planning, delivery and the review of provision in the light of evidence from systematic and structured monitoring of the quality of provision. The planned range of programme provision is also a factor to be noted in the context of responsibilities and roles for personnel in the college.

5.3(a) Criterion

The procedures for Assessment of Learners have the capacity to ensure that assessment as carried out will be fair, consistent and fit for purpose.

5.3(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. provided sufficient assurance in discussions with the panel that it had the capacity to ensure that assessment carried out will be fair, consistent and fit for purpose.

The assessment procedures in the initial application were set out in line with the higher education and training model and will need to be revised as this provider is to operate in the FET sector and it would be expected that the assessment procedures will be fully aligned with FET QA guidelines for assessment. This will ensure that the assessment procedures reflect more fully the understanding of full provider ownership of these policies and procedures i.e. removal of any reference to the role of QQI in such matters.

There is some confusion within a number of the assessment procedures around stages of pre-assessment, planning for assessment and post assessment of learners. These procedures need to be revised. Assessment devised for the validated programme cannot be changed without reference to QQI once a programme is validated and the procedures of the college in relation to fair and consistent assessment must reflect this.

**5.4(a) Criterion**

The policy for Protection of Enrolled Learners clearly states the provider's obligations in this area.

5.4(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd.'s Protection of Enrolled Learners' (PEL) policy demonstrates a clear understanding of its obligations in this area.

5.5(a) Criterion

The system for Self-Evaluation and Improvement is credible and has the potential to support quality provision in the provider.

5.5(b) Finding

In its documentation and at the panel meeting GMB College Ltd.'s management provided the panel with sufficient assurance that it understood the requirements of an effective self-evaluation system. In its initial operating phase, the college has committed to an annual review by the Self-Evaluation Committee of the college services, management, programmes and performance measurements. The annual review will engage external expertise. The panel requires a commitment from GMB College Ltd. to undertake this review on an annual basis for a period of five years. This will support the implementation and embedding of the college's documented quality system.

5.6(a) Criterion

There is evidence of involvement of all significant stakeholders (learners, staff, independent evaluator, external stakeholders) in the process of self-evaluation.

5.6(b) Finding

There is evidence that GMB College Ltd. understands the requirements for all stakeholders to be involved in its self-evaluation processes. The panel acknowledges that the college clarified to the panel's satisfaction how feedback provided by stakeholders will inform decisions to improve programmes.

**5.7(a) Criterion**

The presentation to the panel demonstrates a full ownership and understanding of the quality system by GMB College Ltd. management.

5.7(b) Finding

From the documentation submitted and from the presentation made by the management of the college, it is clear that a high level of planning and consideration has been put into the development of GMB College Ltd.'s Quality Assurance Framework and how it will be implemented. The panel is satisfied that the management team has ownership and understanding of the college's quality system in so far as this can be determined at this stage of the college's operations.

Current staffing is not adequate to support the proposed quality assurance system. The Deputy Director's role in the coordination and implementation of the quality assurance system is supported by a member of the commencement team. The panel recommends that further resources, in terms of accessing suitable expertise with experience of implementation of QA systems in a large FET provider, be committed to support the Deputy Director. This will ensure the college can fully implement its proposed QA Framework. Networking with similar providers may also be useful in this regard.

5.8(a) Criterion

The procedures are capable of being effectively monitored by the provider and/or by QQI.

5.8(b) Finding

GMB College Ltd. is commencing operations with a small core team supported by members of the 'commencement team'. It is acknowledged that current staff will have to undertake a number of roles. The panel considers that the role of Deputy Director requires reconsideration and that it would be more appropriate for the Academic Director to take over a number of tasks related to the implementation of the quality assurance procedures.



5.9 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures: Overall finding

The panel is satisfied that the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by GMB College Ltd. demonstrates a potentially effective quality management system fit for the purposes of education and training programmes leading to major and minor (non-major) NFQ Level 4 to NFQ Level 6 awards.

As the college has yet to commence its operations, the implementation of the draft Quality Assurance procedures will require regular review by the Director and Deputy Director to ensure they remain fit for purpose as the college grows.

The conditions and recommendations made by the panel will strengthen the procedures to support the implementation of an effective quality management system by GMB College Ltd.

Part 6 Conditions and Recommendations

6.1 Conditions

The panel, at the conclusion of the evaluation process, lays down a number of conditions for GMB College Ltd. These conditions must be met to the satisfaction of QQI prior to the commencement of Stage 2 of the access to initial validation process: submission of programmes for validation.

Evaluation of the capacity of GMB College Ltd. to provide quality education and training to learners

4.2 *Resource, governance and structural requirements:*

- Revise the plan to phase the application for validation and delivery of proposed programmes in the following suggested order: Level 4 minor awards in Security, Law and Health and Safety and the Level 5 major award in Trade Union Studies and Level 6 minor awards Equality and Diversity Advocacy and Health and Safety.



When GMB College Ltd. programmes have commenced in these areas, the validation of Early Childcare and Education at Levels 5 and 6 and Level 5 Health Service Skills and Level 6 Management may then commence (para 4.2.2).

4.3 Programme *development* and provision requirements:

- Review and revise the recruitment methodology, selection criteria, role profiles, and proposed contract terms to ensure that the staff recruited have appropriate qualifications and experience pertinent to their roles (para 4.3.2).
- Address the structural weakness identified in the role and responsibilities of the Programme Managers, Internal Assessors, External Examiners and tutors through the implementation of the requirements of the FET Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines (Revised 2013) (para 4.3.6).

Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures

- Review the role of the Academic Committee to ensure the day to day operational tasks are assigned more appropriately (para 5.2).
- Revise the procedures on the stages of pre-assessment, planning for assessment and post assessment of learners. This should include procedures for sampling, internal verification and external authentication and results approval as set out in the FET Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines (Revised 2013) (para 5.3).
- Make a commitment to undertake the Self-Evaluation Committee's review, engaging external expertise, on an annual basis for a period of five years (para 5.5).
- Commit further resources to ensure GMB College Ltd. can fully implement its proposed extensive QA framework. An experienced mentor with a large FET provider background is recommended. This additional resource together with a review of the roles and responsibilities of the Deputy Director and Academic Director will provide a sound basis for successful implementation of its proposed QA framework (para 5.7 and 5.8).

It is a standard condition of the initial access to programme validation process that providers who have their draft QA procedures agreed by QQI must apply to validate the proposed programmes within six months of their approval. This condition applies to GMB College Ltd.



6.2 Recommendations

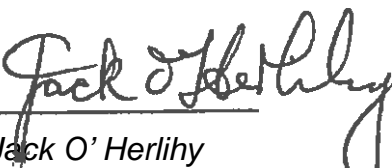
The panel, at the conclusion of the evaluation process, makes the following recommendations for improvement to GMB College Ltd.

- Provide the commencement team with an opportunity to develop its knowledge and understanding of the qualifications system: awards, learning outcomes, programme design, development and internal approval of programmes (para 4.3.1).
- Network with other established providers who offer accredited education and training (para 5.7).

Part 7 Approval by Chair of the Panel

This report of the Quality and Capacity Panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the recommendation to approve the draft Quality Assurance Procedures of GMB College Ltd. and approve its progression to Stage 2 of the initial validation process.

Name:


Jack O'Herlihy
Chair, Quality and Capacity Sub-panel

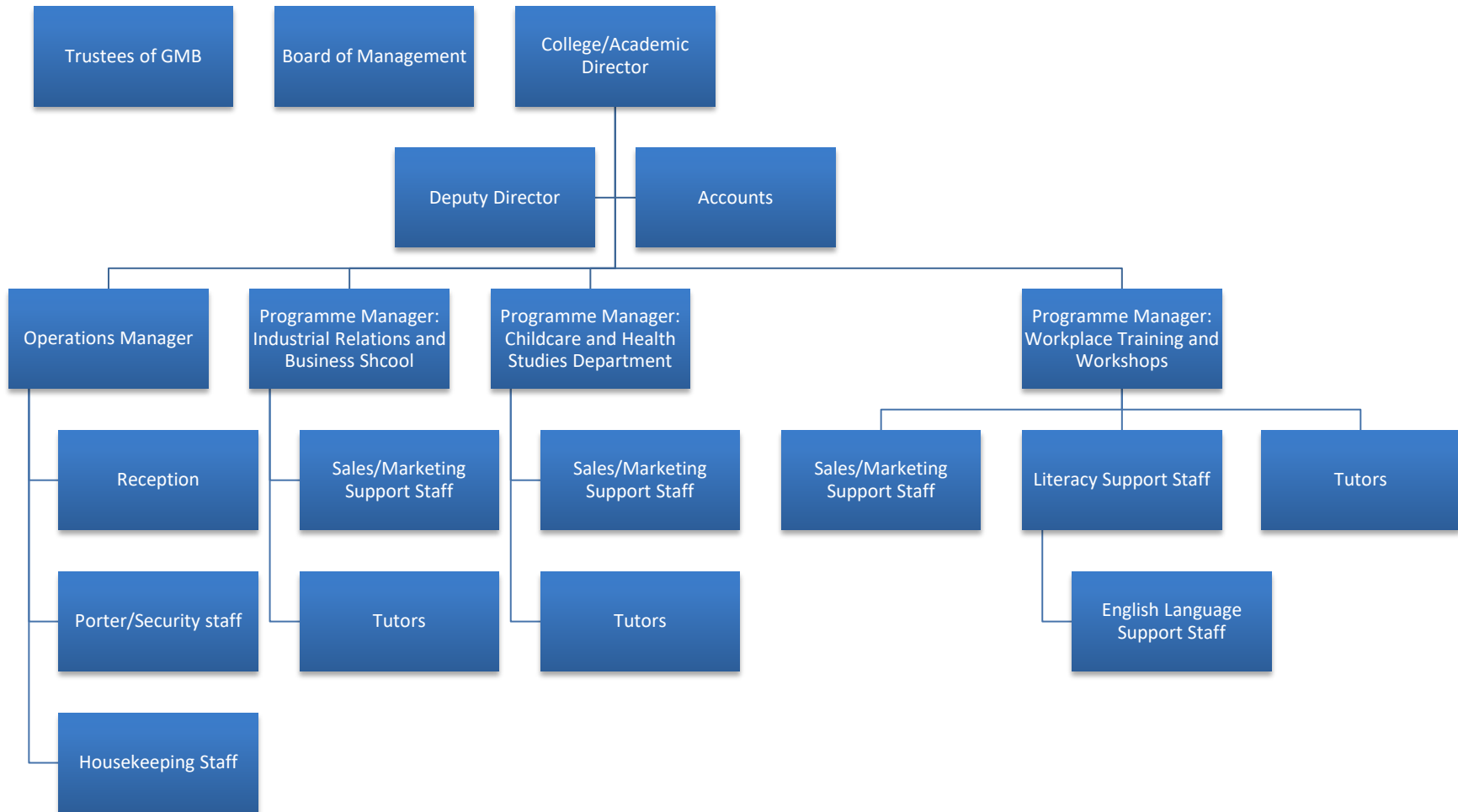
Date: 13 April 2015



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Annex 1: GMB College Organisational Structure





Annex 2: Documentation provided to the Panel in the course of the Evaluation

- Applicants completed application form, including the statutory declaration and supporting documentation.
- Applicant's self-assessment against the criteria for access to initial validation.
- Provider draft QA procedures and supporting documentation.
- QQI report of site visit dated 25 March 2015.

Annex 3: GMB College staff met in the course of the Evaluation

Name	Role/Position
Mary Seery Kearney	Academic Director
Melisa Nelis Kearney	Deputy Director
David Kearney	GMB Branch Secretary Senior Organiser; College Operation Manager
Thomas Morris	MA, MSW, CQSW – Health Care & Childcare Education Advisor. Member of the Commencement Team.
Ann Keating	MSW, CQSW - Health Care Advisor. Member of the Commencement Team.
Norman Croke	LLB, MA, DIP Employment Law, Dip Management – Trade Union & Employment Law Education Advisor. Member of the Commencement Team