

PROGRAMMES AND AWARDS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (PAEC)

Thursday 4 February 2021 at 9:30am

via Microsoft Teams

Draft Note of the 51st meeting of the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held via Microsoft Teams, at 9:30am on **Thursday 4 February 2021**.

Present:

Dr Pdraig Walsh (Chairperson)
Ms Andrina Wafer
Ms Angela Lambkin
Ms Barbara Kelly
Dr Bryan Maguire
Dr John O'Connor
Ms Marie Gould

In attendance:

Ms Therese Masterson (Key Executive)
Ms Janet Cawley (Secretary)
Ms Carmel Kelly
Mr Walter Balfe
Dr Deirdre Stritch (Items 7.2, 9 and 14)

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson enquired and confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest in relation to any of the items of business before the Committee. The Committee noted that there was one item to be tabled at the meeting:

Proposal to revise /extend Blended Learning Quality Assurance Guidelines to include fully online delivery and assessment.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING OF 3 DECEMBER 2020

2.1 The Minutes of the PAEC Meeting held on 3 December 2020 were approved by the Committee.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Any matters arising were covered within agenda items and were discussed during the meeting.

4. NOTE OF THE MEETING, REPORT FOR THE BOARD

4.1 Note of Meeting of 3 December 2020

The Committee APPROVED the Note of the PAEC Meeting of 3 December 2020 for publication on the QQI website.

4.2 Report for the Board on the Meeting of 3 December 2020

The Committee NOTED the Report for the Board on the PAEC Meeting of 3 December 2020.

5. PROGRAMME VALIDATION APPLICATIONS

5.1 Further Education and Training (FET) Programmes

5.1.1 Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated and the detailed report presented. The Committee APPROVED the validation of the following programme:

5.1.1.1 PG24421, Certificate in Dementia Care, Level 5, Supplemental Certificate, 15 Credits

5.2 Higher Education and Training Programmes – Programme Validation

5.2.1 Dublin Business School

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated and the detailed report presented. The Committee APPROVED the validation of the programmes below for five years subject to any special conditions of validation, and all the conditions from the current validation policy listed in the proposed Certificate of Validation:

5.2.1.1 PG24393, Master of Science in Human Resource Management, Level 9, Major Award, 90 Credits
PG24394, Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Human Resource Management, Level 9, Major Award, 60 Credits (*Exit Award*)
PG24395, Certificate in Human Resource Management, Level 9, Minor Award, 30 Credits (*Exit Award*)

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated and the detailed report presented. The Committee APPROVED the validation of the programme below for three years subject to any special conditions of validation, and all the conditions from the current validation policy listed in the proposed Certificate of Validation:

5.2.1.2 PG24444, Certificate in Data Analytics, Level 8, Special Purpose Award, 10 Credits
(*Microcredential*)

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated and the detailed report presented. The Committee APPROVED the validation of the programme below for three years subject to any special conditions of validation, and all the conditions from the current validation policy listed in the proposed Certificate of Validation:

5.2.1.3 PG24435, Certificate in Marketing Essentials, Level 6, Special Purpose Award, 10 Credits
(*Microcredential*)

5.3 Devolution of Responsibility for Validation Sub-Processes

No Business

5.4 Validation of Research Degree Programmes

No Business

5.5 Apprenticeship Programmes

No Business

6. REVALIDATION

6.1 Application for Extension of Validation Period

6.1.1 International School of Business (ISB)

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated.

International School of Business (ISB) successfully completed the reengagement process in Q4 2020, the provider's QA was approved at the PAEC meeting in December 2020. As a result of reengagement, ISB has been tasked with conducting a root and branch of all assessments. The provider felt that going straight into a review and revalidation exercise with staff immediately would be neither viable nor productive. By postponing the revalidation exercise until working conditions are more favourable, the institution and the faculty will regenerate the "bandwidth" to complete programme review and revalidation to both the letter and spirit of the provider's and reengagement panel's intention. International School of Business (ISB) requested to extend the last intake date by one year for the programmes listed below:

- 6.1.1.1 PG22560, Certificate in Business for International Learners, Level 6, Special Purpose Award, 30 Credits
- PG22561, Certificate in Sales and Management, Level 6, Special Purpose Award, 30 Credits
- PG22562, Certificate in Digital Marketing and Media, Level 6, Special Purpose Award, 30 Credits

The Committee APPROVED the request to extend the last intake date for one year.

6.2 Applications for Revalidation

No Business

7. FOLLOW-UP ON PAEC RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS IN PANEL REPORTS

7.1 Update on the follow-up of conditions of validation

QQI is required to follow up on any special conditions of validation identified by an evaluation panel. The special conditions of validation that require follow-up are any conditions that have yet to be met at the time of the PAEC meeting at which the relevant application for validation is being considered, or those conditions that are ongoing in nature and will require explicit monitoring for the period for which the programme has been validated.

CCT College Dublin

The Committee noted the documentation circulated.

In September 2020, the PAEC approved the validation of the following two programmes proposed by CCT College Dublin:

PG24349, Higher Diploma in Science in Data Analytics for Business, Level 8, Major Award, 60 Credits

PG24350, Higher Diploma in Science in Artificial Intelligence Applications, Level 8, Major Award, 60 Credits

Both programmes had two special conditions of validation outstanding at the time of validation. The panel requested that the executive ensure the outstanding conditions of validation are met.

Condition 1 related to the approval of QA for blended learning provision by QQI.

CCT College had its QA of blended learning approved in September 2020.

Condition 2 required CCT to develop a process for formalising stakeholder involvement in programme development and review within a period of six months. The panel had made a detailed recommendation for CCT regarding how this could be achieved.

CCT submitted their proposed follow-up on condition 2 which was evaluated by the QQI executive.

The Committee NOTED that the executive now considers the two conditions to be met and that no further follow-up is required.

7.2 Update on the follow-up of conditions of QA Approval

As part of its internal quality assurance procedures, the executive is required to follow up on any “Conditions of QA Approval” imposed by the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC).

7.2.1 Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG)

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. At its meeting on 15 October 2020, the PAEC approved the QA procedures of the Local Authority Services Training Group (LASNTG) with the following condition of QA Approval:

- Report to QQI on the implementation of proposed mandatory change 7.1.3, pertaining to the publication of the draft QA and the Privacy Policy.

The Committee NOTED that the executive considers the condition of approval to be met and that no further follow-up is required.

7.2.2 Elevation Training

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. At its meeting on 3 December 2020, the PAEC approved the QA procedures of Elevation Training with the following conditions of QA Approval:

Condition 1

Elevation Training must review the governance arrangements as documented in the QA Manual to:

- a) clearly detail the cross membership (if any) of the Boards of Directors of the different companies in the Group, in the interest of clarity and transparency.
- b) reconsider the powers of the Board of Directors to disband or reconstitute the Academic Board.
- c) clearly detail the interlinking relationship between commercial and academic decision-making in the programme development process, in the interest of ensuring the appropriate involvement of both units of governance in decision making processes.

Condition 2

The Terms of Reference for the Academic Board must be amended to appoint one of the external independent members as Chair, on a non-rotating basis.

Condition 3

The Terms of Reference for the Results Approval Panel (RAP) must be amended to appoint one of the external independent members of the Academic Board as Chair.

Condition 4

Invoke the procedure as documented in 10.5 Stakeholder Feedback and Evaluation on Page 178 of the QA Manual to engage the services of an external quality assurance expert to conduct a review of the procedures included in the Manual with a view to their further detailed development. This should be put in place without delay.

The Committee NOTED that the executive considers the conditions of approval to be met and that no further follow-up is required.

8. QA FOR COLLABORATIVE AND TRANSNATIONAL PROVISION

No Business

9. APPROVAL OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR LEGACY PROVIDERS (RE-ENGAGEMENT)

9.1 The American College Dublin

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS the quality assurance procedures of The American College Dublin.

The Committee NOTED that all mandatory changes confirmed by the PAEC at its meeting on 16 July 2020 had been satisfactorily addressed.

9.2 Barrow Consulting and Training

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS the quality assurance procedures of Barrow Consulting and Training.

The Committee NOTED that all mandatory changes confirmed by the PAEC at its meeting on 10 September 2020 had been satisfactorily addressed.

9.3 A Named Provider

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee REFUSED TO APPROVE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS the quality assurance procedures of a named provider (pending mandatory changes being made). The named provider may submit revised procedures for approval within a six-month period of notification of this decision.

9.4 A Named Provider

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee REFUSED TO APPROVE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS the quality assurance procedures of a named provider (pending mandatory changes being made). The named provider may submit revised procedures for approval within a six-month period of notification of this decision.

9.5 A Named Provider

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee REFUSED TO APPROVE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS the quality assurance procedures of a named provider (pending mandatory changes being made). The named provider may submit revised procedures for approval within a six-month period of notification of this decision.

9.6 Irish Payroll Association

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee APPROVED the quality assurance procedures of Irish Payroll Association.

9.7 A Named Provider

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated. The Committee REFUSED TO APPROVE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS the quality assurance procedures of a named provider (pending mandatory changes being made). The named provider may submit revised procedures for approval within a six-month period of notification of this decision.

10. ROUTINE STANDARDS ACTIVITIES UPDATE

No Business

11. CHANGE OF STATUS OF LEGACY HET AND FET PROVIDERS

No Business

12. REPORT FROM THE PROGRAMMES AND AWARDS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (PAOC)

No Business

13. OBSERVATIONS OF THE PROGRAMMES AND AWARDS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (PAOC) REPRESENTATIVES AT THE PAEC

13.1 The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated.

At its meeting of May 2017, the Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC) welcomed and accepted a proposal from the PAEC to enable its members to attend PAEC meetings, as observers. Since this arrangement was put in place, all members of the PAOC have attended at least one PAEC meeting. The PAOC observer at the PAEC meeting presents a summary of their observations at the next occurring PAOC meeting. PAOC members have shared their observations at PAOC meetings.

Overall, the PAOC representatives' feedback has been extremely positive. The PAOC members found the PAEC meetings very beneficial to them in better understanding the functions of the PAEC, particularly with regard to the programme validation process and the process by which negative decisions are referred to the PAOC. The breadth of experience of PAEC members was noted, as was the diligence with which the members reviewed the documentation presented at the PAEC meetings. PAOC members also noted the robust nature and quality of discussion of items on the PAEC agenda and concurred that the meetings are well chaired and conducted. The observations made by PAOC members suggested that they found attending PAEC meetings a worthwhile experience which gave them an increased understanding and confidence in the programme validation process.

The PAOC members agreed that they would be interested in continuing to attend the PAEC meetings, subject to availability.

The Terms of Reference of the PAOC states that the PAOC has a role in making recommendations on the strategic direction of the activities of the PAEC. At its meeting on 10 November 2020, the PAOC noted that it would be interested in exploring how it might fulfil this function and would welcome any feedback from the PAEC in this regard.

The PAEC members discussed this request and agreed that the Chair of the Committee will feed this discussion back to the Board to explore this further.

14. SURVEY ON EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE SITE VISITS

14.1 Survey on Experience of Online Site Visits

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated.

QQI conducted a survey of provider and panel member experiences of moving to online or virtual site visits during the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey relates to providers and panels that were involved in QA Approval evaluations. The survey was conducted with the aim of identifying areas in which the current process or guidelines for same could be improved.

In May 2020, QQI moved its QA approval evaluations online in response to the public health restrictions imposed in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. This included the full day 'site visit' between the panel and the provider. QQI uses Microsoft Teams to facilitate these meetings and has produced guidance for both panel members and providers to ensure the meetings proceed as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

The provider survey was sent to 27 providers with 25 responding (93% response rate). The panel member survey was sent to 61 panel members with 49 responding (80% response rate).

Levels of satisfaction expressed with the process were extremely high. For example, 96% of panel members and 92% of providers felt that the support and guidelines provided by QQI for online site visits was sufficient. 93% of panel members were satisfied that the set up on Microsoft Teams was as effective and efficient as a face-to-face meeting and 92% of providers felt that the online site visit effective and robust. Notable were the many comments praising the professionalism and courtesy of QQI staff and the efficiency of QQI processes.

In response to feedback received, the executive now invites providers to submit a recorded tour of their premises in advance of the meeting (where desired and feasible) and encourages the panel to have a second private meeting in advance of the online meeting as this has been identified as an important means of building rapport amongst team members. Lastly, QQI will review the template agenda for the meetings to ensure that sessions are not too long and breaks between sessions are of an adequate length.

More difficult to address was the feedback from panel members on the loss of the informal and indirect benefits of face-face-meetings, such as the unofficial conversations with peer reviewers and the provider.

15. ISSUES PAPER ON AWARD CLASSIFICATION IN RELATION TO THE QQI CERTIFICATE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR OTHER LANGUAGE (TESOL) AWARD

15.1 Issues Paper on Award Classification in Relation to the QQI Certificate in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) Award

The Committee NOTED the documentation circulated.

At its meeting on 3 December 2020, the Committee did not make a decision on the classification scheme proposed by Bridge Mills Galway Language Centre - who had their Certificate in TESOL programme validated by QQI at that meeting. The Committee requested the executive to prepare an issues paper on this matter.

The issues paper outlined the issues relating to the classification of the Certificate in TESOL award and proposed a suitable scheme for the classification of the award. It was noted that the classification system that is agreed must

take into account both the specificity of the ELE sector both nationally and internationally *and* QQI award classification conventions.

As Fail, Pass and Distinction are the terms widely used nationally and internationally, the classification terms and corresponding percentage marks proposed in the issues paper are as follows:

Classification of Certificate in TESOL (NFQ Level 7)	PPA (percentage point average) boundary levels	Description
Distinction	>=75%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Pass	>=40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes
Fail	<40%	

The Committee APPROVED the proposed scheme for the classification of the Certificate in TESOL award.

16. PROPOSAL TO REVISE / EXTEND BLENDED LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES TO INCLUDE FULLY ONLINE DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT

16.1 Proposal to revise / extend Blended Learning Quality Assurance Guidelines to include fully online delivery and assessment.

This item was TABLED at the meeting and was taken before item 9.

The Committee NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum and tabled documentation circulated.

It proposed that QQI extend the current QA Guidelines for Blended Learning to include guidance for quality assuring programmes which have no face-to-face element i.e., those that are 100% online. Given the generic nature of current validation criteria, it is not envisaged that they would require amendment.

The methodology would be two part as follows:

1. Review and edit of current Blended Learning (BL) guidelines:
 - This task would be contracted to an expert in online delivery and assessment and would be informed by appropriate research and consultation.
2. QA Approval and Programme Validation - Pilot: this would involve one or more HET and FET providers, already approved for blended provision, working with QQI in a pilot exercise to identify necessary amendments to quality assurance and programme development processes. As part of the pilot the providers could develop and submit programmes delivered fully online for validation. Such programmes will be brought to the PAEC for approval for online-only delivery.

The two approaches i.e., editing guidelines and provider-based pilot would happen in parallel and would be mutually referential.

The Committee agreed with the executive's proposal to revise / extend Blended Learning Quality Assurance Guidelines to include fully online delivery and assessment.