



Lárionad Náisiúnta um Threoir san Oideachas  
National Centre for Guidance in Education

**NCGE FET Guidance Program Coordinator, Mary Stokes Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> 2017.**

**Feedback re. QQI Sector Specific Guidelines White Paper: For Consultation.**

**FET Guidance Coordinator with DES Agency National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)**

NCGE is committed to ensuring that Quality Assurance is an expectation and reality in all aspects of Guidance provision throughout FET. We welcome the White paper from QQI 'Sector specific Quality Guidelines' regarding the establishment of Statutory QA Guidelines developed by QQI for Education and Training Boards, and appreciate the invitation to offer some comments afforded through QQI's Consultation Process.

There is considerable distinction in the Guidance Services to FET which offers a distinction from the QA challenges for Program providers. I suggest that the DES Agency NCGE can take the responsibility to underpin and support the ongoing development of Quality Guidance Systems, guidelines and oversee Quality Assurance of Guidance provision throughout the FET sector, and that the Expertise and specific nature of Guidance provision is best supported by this specialist & dedicated support from NCGE, working in cooperation and collaboration with SOLAS, ETBI and ETBs.

*FET Strategy 2014-2019 states: "Everybody who engages with FET, whether employed or unemployed or wishing to engage with FET for the purpose of learning, can access a **high quality** career guidance, counselling and labour market information service"*

Regarding this submission, it is worth noting that NCGE is the DES appointed Agency with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform the policy of the Department in the field of guidance. It is the responsibility of NCGE to include Quality Assurance of the Guidance Provision in that support.

**From the Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines White Paper: "sector-specific guidelines add to the core by addressing the specific responsibilities of the education and training boards (ETBs) as set in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 (the 2012 Act). Education and training boards should also refer to QQI's other topic specific quality assurance guidelines, as appropriate..."**

With respect to this White Paper, NCGE suggest that ETBs refer & rely on NCGE to support the development of Quality Assured FET Guidance Provision through NCGE's role in supporting Guidance Provision throughout the sector.

Ensuring Quality Assured Guidance Service throughout FET:

The FET Strategy 2014-2019 dedicated Section 10 of that document to the issue of Guidance Provision in FET.

Section 10: *Guidance and FET ...*'looks at guidance and counselling policy at EU and national level as well as current guidance practice pertaining to the FET sector. (Submissions) received as part of the FET consultation process call for a FET guidance service that **builds on current AEGI integrated guidance counselling aims.**

Guidance Counselling Quality issues such as CPD, Supervision & accountability have all been supported in the AEGI model. It is the expectation that the development of the FET Guidance Strategy between NCGE-ETBI- DES-SOLAS will evolve to include the broader FET Guidance provision in the Quality measures that the AEGI have upheld and refined.

As a matter of good practice & as outlined in DES agreed 'AEGS Operational Guidelines 2012' AEGS complete twice yearly reports via the Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS) for DES & SOLAS which is coordinated and monitored by NCGE. These reports provide quantitative and qualitative reports for quality assurance purposes. NCGE publish the Executive report of these twice yearly reports onto the AEGI Web based-Handbook for review and reference purposes.

It is the suggestion that in the development of an FET Guidance Strategy as under discussion between NCGE-ETBI, and to be extended to consultation, that all guidance staff employed by ETBs, (to extend & include Guidance Staff outside of current AEGI) could be linked to the adult guidance service to ensure quality assurance of the ETB Guidance service, including reporting mechanisms & access to national supports, professional supervision and continuous professional development programmes.

NCGE FET Guidance Program Coordinator will be looking for the support of the stakeholders to engage the QA supports across Guidance Provision in the sector.

#### NCGE Role in Quality Assurance – International standards:

NCGE is the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) representative for Ireland which facilitates access to research, policy documents & EU council recommendations that can inform Quality Assurance considerations for Guidance provision in FET. In addition the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) supports EU Member States to test the Guidance Framework for Quality Assurance and evidence-based practice at National Level.

NCGE represents Ireland and was the lead Country in the Quality Assurance & Evidence Base working group 2013-2014 and co-lead with Portugal 2015.

NCGE hosts the National Forum on Guidance (NFG) with the focus of bringing together practitioners, stakeholders and policy makers involved in guidance to discuss issues of relevance to and for guidance and to support co-operation and collaboration of the various providers across the lifelong guidance spectrum.

November 2015 NCGE conducted a survey and agreed to set up an NFG working group on QA in guidance. NCGE had to postpone work on this but intend to progress this collaborating with the various organisations to consider the issues for FET & ETBs.

*Ref: ELGPN 'ELGPN Tool No. 3: The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance' builds on earlier work by the Network, including the Quality Assurance and Evidence (QAE) Framework which provides an approach for policymakers to address quality assurance and evidence based policy and system development.*

<http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/elgpn-tools-no-1-excerpt-quality-assurance-and-evidence-base-qae-framework>

[http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN\\_QAE\\_tool\\_no\\_5\\_web.pdf/](http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN_QAE_tool_no_5_web.pdf/)

Throughout this document I suggest that there are significant points of interest to the NCGE role in supporting Quality Assured FET Guidance service provision. I have cut below the points that are most relevant to this organisation, and in particular I would like to concur with the comment from the White Paper:

'Periodic quality review should be understood in the context of a range of other mechanisms in education and training institutions, with which they must interact and which they must support if they are to be fully effective. Integrated, corporate approaches to quality improvement should be designed to **eliminate unnecessary duplication, reduce burden, to promote synergies and support the management system...**'

- These guidelines are applicable to education and training boards (ETBs) and to any education or training institution established and maintained by an ETB. ETBs manage and operate...a range of adult and further education and training centres delivering education and training programmes<sup>1</sup>.
- National policy is that the provider-owned, quality assurance procedures of education and training boards will be comprehensive. This means that they will cover all education and training, research and related activities of the ETBs, regardless of whether or not these lead to QQI awards...
- The scope of the quality assurance procedures for any individual ETB will depend upon the structure of the ETB in terms of the diversity of the education and training activities and the scope of provision. **Scope of quality assurance procedures is also related to the complexity of the provision, how active ETBs are in and across their local communities, engagements with other ETBs and stakeholders. This includes engagements with other parties for the purposes of provision and related services and the range of awarding, regulatory, professional or statutory bodies that ETBs may be working with or accountable to. These sector specific guidelines have been set out in the broad context of the possibility for ETBs...**
- They refer to a **sectoral approach towards the development of quality assurance guidelines** recognising the high level of co-operation, collaboration and cross referencing, on many developments, including quality assurance that exists within the ETB sector.
- The QA procedures for the governance and management of an ETB will operate at many levels of the organisation and throughout the different layers of the organisation. **Given the distributed, diverse and evolving nature of the ETBs, it is important that a multi-layered system is in place so that quality and its assurance is being monitored in a consistent and appropriate way within and across the various constituent divisions or institutions of an ETB. These refer to the many schools, colleges, training centres and community-based, adult education services, and contracted providers that are engaged in the delivery and assessment of education and training programmes. The quality assurance procedures established by ETBs should strike a balance between the corporate responsibility of an ETB and one which respects the significant roles and accountabilities of the various centres, divisions and institutions on the frontline of education and training provision.**
- **Describe what role(s) and responsibilities exist for coordinating quality assurance activities and governance of teaching and learning both locally in the various educational or training institutions established and maintained by an ETB; and at the senior corporate level within an ETB.** These should include collaborative quality assurance activities and cooperative developments with ETBI, with other ETBs and with other education and training bodies and stakeholders.
- **Periodic quality review should be understood in the context of a range of other mechanisms in education and training institutions, with which they must interact and which they must support if they are to be fully effective. Integrated, corporate approaches to quality improvement should be designed to eliminate unnecessary duplication, reduce burden, to promote synergies and support the management system.**
- **ETB corporate planning and oversight. This includes monitoring and reporting on the totality of programme provision in the context of the programme lifecycle<sup>4</sup> across all centres operated by the ETB, having regard to educational, employment, social and cultural needs.** These should include for example:

#### **NCGE Role with AEGIs:**

- **Planning, development and maintenance of resources required to ensure capacity to support programme provision and quality at the point of delivery (in the ETB centre/institutions);**
- **Staff planning, performance monitoring and capacity development having regard to the need for (vocational trainers to) keep up-to-date in their vocational skills (in addition to any pedagogical skills);**

- Development and planning of systems to promote quality teaching and learning in all relevant learning environments (e.g. workplace, flexible distributed (e-learning), classroom, and practical training environments) and monitor this at centre level and ETB level;

#### **6.1 ETBS COLLABORATING ON A NATIONAL BASIS**

##### **NCGE FET Guidance Program Coordinator Promotes & Supports:**

- *(Development of Collaborative)* Management Information Systems
- The collaborative development of such shared or cooperative arrangements as they impact on many matters which are core to any provider owned quality assurance system