

Memorandum of Understanding between Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

1. Purpose and Scope

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (hereinafter referred to as QQI) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (hereinafter referred to as the National Forum) sets out the role and responsibilities of the National Forum and QQI and an agreed framework for its collaboration and cooperation.

The purpose of the Memorandum is to:

- i. Identify areas of cooperation and collaboration between The National Forum with respect to the enhancement of teaching and learning in the higher education sector in Ireland and the policy and other development work of QQI;
- ii. Facilitate enhanced engagement and cooperation between QQI and the National Forum.

This Memorandum is cognisant of the vision for teaching and learning presented in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, of the key system-objective to promote excellence in teaching and learning detailed in the *Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018–2020*; the *Action Plan for Education 2019* and the *QQI Statement of Strategy 2019-2021* where collaboration and engagement with stakeholders is a key priority in addition to Analysis and impact.

This Memorandum is not intended to be exhaustive in its identification of responsibilities, nor does it in any way limit any additional areas for collaboration between the National Forum and QQI.

Both QQI and the National Forum will ensure that all relevant staff in both organisations are familiar with the Memorandum and its implications, and that all dealings between the two entities are conducted in accordance with its principles and provisions.

2. Roles

The respective roles of the two entities in advancing this mission are set out overleaf.

2.1 Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of institutions and providers in both higher and further education and training in Ireland operating within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It is also the custodian of the NFQ and makes and certifies awards. In addition, QQI is responsible for developing an International Education Mark for education and training programmes delivered to international students and establishing a national register of programme and qualifications.

QQI works in partnership with students, various agencies, higher education institutions and other stakeholders in education and training and is seeking to contribute to the work of key influencers and policy makers.

Central to the QQI's strategic development of a coherent and effective higher education system is collaboration and engagement. The establishment of this MOU will enable QQI and the National Forum to build on the current synergies of their respective roles within the sector, and will contribute to QQI's further understanding of the impact of policy when it is being implemented within higher education institutions. The latter will inform further enabling policy development.

2.2 National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

The National Forum is responsible for transforming teaching and learning in higher education and is the national advisory body on teaching and learning to the HEA.

The National Forum works in partnership with Irish higher education through its representative bodies and the wider student, academic and professional services communities, to enhance teaching and learning for real impact on the learning experiences and outcomes of students.

Following an initial development phase which established the National Forum as an essential component of the national-level infrastructure for higher education, the National Forum has identified four strategic priorities to December 2021:

The Professional Development of All Those Who Teach

Promoting evidence-based, flexible, inclusive professional development for all those who teach, reflecting the contextual needs and drivers within and across higher education institutions

Teaching and Learning in a Digital World

Supporting those who learn, teach and support learning to embrace and harness the potential of digital technologies with the overall goal of enhancing learning, teaching, and overall digital capability

Teaching and Learning Enhancement Within and Across Disciplines

Recognising that disciplines are a key unit of change in higher education, with a focus on disciplinary excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

Student Success

Developing a vision of success, in partnership with students, to provide all students with the opportunity to fulfil their potential and to ensure that they are professionally competent, generators of new knowledge, ethically conscious and equipped to flourish in a global world

3. Collaboration and cooperation

The promotion of excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high-quality student experience is a key system-level objective and a central challenge for the sector. QQI and the National Forum have a common mission in supporting the enhancement of the student-learning experience and sustaining public confidence in the quality of the education and training. QQI is primarily responsible for maintaining the integrity of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and in promoting best practice and accountability through internal institutional and an external quality assurance system, central to which is the teaching and learning environment. The mission of the National Forum is, as a national body, to lead the enhancement of teaching and learning in partnership with students, staff and leaders in Irish higher education to develop an ethical, inclusive, collaborative and innovative culture that supports the success of all students.

Both organisations work closely with the higher education institutions and other agencies and have collaborated successfully to date. A positive outcome and a broader stakeholder reach was achieved for a number of projects for example, Assessment as of/as/for learning, the Recognition of Prior learning and the RPL network; dissemination of sectoral enhancement tools with open availability for all education and training providers. Although the commitment of QQI to work with the National Forum is explicitly included in the current QQI- HEA MOU, this partnership approach will be further strengthened through by an explicit QQI-National Forum MOU.

QQI and the National Forum agree through this initial MoU to cooperate for the benefit of both parties and to work towards establishing a strategic alliance to enhance external quality assurance in teaching and learning and to improve the quality of the higher education system in Ireland. This MoU is not intended to create legally binding relations between the parties, and neither party has the authority to act on behalf of or otherwise bind the other party. QQI and the Forum agree to work together to implement this MoU in good faith and will pursue the following objectives for their mutual benefit and with a commitment to learn from each other's processes and where possible reduce unnecessary duplication on providers and other stakeholders. Cooperation has been identified in the following areas:

(a) Information Sharing

The National Forum and QQI will provide any relevant information to each other that has an impact on their respective roles and functions in a timely manner.

(b) Recognition of Prior Learning

Work to promote and enhance the national agenda around the recognition of prior learning and the development of open access professional development short courses (Leading to a National Forum

Digital Badge) (1) to build understanding of RPL within the sector. (2) To inform the development of enabling RPL policies and share good practice across institutions.

(c) Professional Bodies

Exchange information and engage in joint efforts to liaise with professional bodies accrediting and engaging with Irish higher education providers in accordance with the strategic objectives of both organisations.

(d) Impact and enhancement

Where appropriate and possible, to liaise closely on the implementation of common strategic initiatives, use the expertise in each organisation subject to operational constraints, draw on each other's expertise to strengthen the impact on the HE system and stakeholder reach for policies, processes, engagements and initiatives. QQI will prepare IEM in 2019.

In an effort to support this MOU, enhance communications between the two organisations and to enable QQI to gain a deeper understanding of the current operating environment ahead of significant policy developments planned for 2020 - QQI will provide the National Forum with a staff resource (1 FTE) for this initiative for an initial period of 12 months. This will provide QQI with a deeper understanding of the enhancement model and approaches of the National Forum including impact analysis of the current projects. This arrangement will be subject to the secondment agreement attached as part of this MOU.

(e) Collaborate on Other areas

QQI and the National Forum will continue to collaborate in relation to mutually agreed projects and activities not limited to those referenced in this agreement, for the benefit of both parties. Where appropriate and possible, support the development of staff from both parties through activities such as staff exchange, observing each other's engagements and processes, and the provision of training.

4. Communication and Liaison Arrangements

All communication regarding this MOU and associated secondment will be through Karena Maguire, Head of Stakeholder Engagement (QQI) and Terry Maguire, Director (National Forum).

5. Business Planning and Reporting Arrangements

Annual planning and update meeting with National Forum Executive and QQI staff

6. Specific Operational Arrangements

None

7. Sign-off and Review Process

This Memorandum is jointly signed by the Chief Executive Officer of QQI and the Director of the National Forum, and it takes effect from January 1st 2019 and is valid until August 2021.

This Memorandum will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. It will be fully reviewed at the end of its first year of operation. It may be modified or extended by mutual written agreement. All changes to this Memorandum will be ratified by the Board of the National Forum and by the HEA Policy and Planning Standing Committee.


Signed on behalf of the QQI:


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Dr Pádraig Walsh
Chief Executive

Date: 20/12/18

Signed on behalf of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning:


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Dr Terry Maguire
Director, National Forum

Date: 30/01/2019.....

