



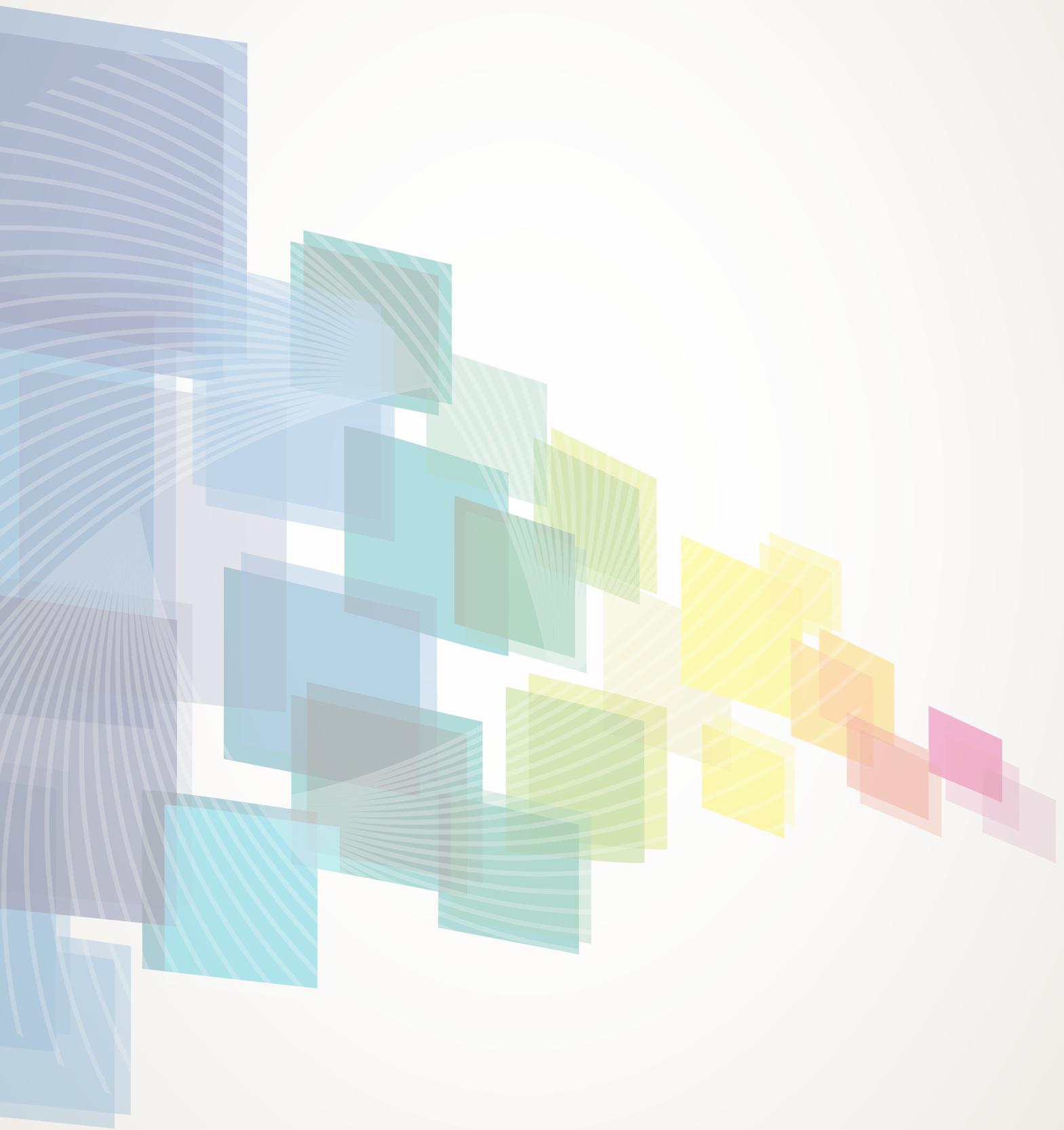
QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Annual Report





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1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CHAIR

This Annual Report for 2013 represents the activities for the first full year of operation of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). During the year, the Board of QQI met on eight occasions.

In March, as part of Ireland's presidency of the European Council, QQI organised a major international conference on 'Quality Assurance in Qualifications Frameworks' in Dublin Castle. In May, the launch of 18 Green Papers as part of the Comprehensive Policy Development Programme in the Croke Park Convention Centre was another significant event for QQI.

The Board adopted White Papers on Initial Access to Programme Validation, Protection for Enrolled Learners and Fees for QQI Services. These were important developments that allowed QQI to open access in October to new providers of further and higher education to the process of programme validation leading to QQI awards.

Ireland's strong commitment to the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was further recognised when the Chief Executive of QQI was elected President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) at the association's General Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania in October. At the same meeting, QQI signed a Memorandum of Association and an Information Sharing Protocol with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom. Throughout 2013, QQI staff contributed to many European events in the areas of quality assurance and qualifications.

During 2013, The Board agreed to establish a sub-Board Committee structure to assist the Board in carrying out its statutory functions. The first two of these Committees, the Audit Committee and the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee were established and held their initial meeting in 2013. The Board committed to establishing further Committees in 2014.

A very significant milestone for the organisation was the adoption and publication in November of the 'QQI Strategic Statement 2014-16', incorporating the mission, vision and values for the organisation and the adoption of QQI's goals and strategic approaches. The Statement was finalised after extensive consultation with the Board and staff of QQI, the Department of Education and Skills and a large number of external stakeholders. The adoption of the 3 year Strategic Statement will permit QQI to develop Annual Corporate plans which will assist the organisation in delivering on our mission and goals in subsequent years.

We look forward to 2014 and the further integration of our organisation and the development of new policies and procedures to enable us to support the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training systems; to quality assure providers and to support and promote a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders.

We hope you find this Annual Report informative and useful.

Mr Gordon Clark
Chair, QQI

Dr Padraig Walsh
Chief Executive, QQI

2. ABOUT QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established on 6 November 2012 under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI was formed by an amalgamation of four bodies that had both awarding and quality assurance responsibilities: the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). QQI assumed all the functions of the four legacy bodies while also having responsibility for new functions in particular areas.

QQI is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training (including English language provision) in Ireland. QQI validates programmes and makes awards to certain providers in these sectors and is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI has configured its functions across seven main sections of business; Quality Assurance Services, Qualifications Services, Provider Relations, Industry and External Partnerships, Corporate Affairs and Communications, Audit and Procurement, and Strategic Analysis.

QQI's functions are to:

- Quality assure providers of further and higher education and training
- Promote, develop, maintain and review the National Framework of Qualifications
- Validate programmes and make awards
- Inform the public about the quality of education and training programmes and qualifications
- Advise the Minister on national policy regarding quality assurance and enhancement in education and training.

QQI's stakeholders come from all sectors of education and training: learners, providers, Government departments, State agencies and funding bodies, regulatory bodies, professional bodies, qualifications awarding bodies, sector and representative bodies and international bodies responsible for quality assurance and qualifications.



3. MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

To promote the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training and quality assure providers. We aim to support and promote a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders.

VISION

Extensive high-quality education and training opportunities with qualifications that are widely valued nationally and internationally.

VALUES

Learner-Centred

We promote a culture of access, responsiveness, flexibility, trust and quality in education and training and qualifications. We place the learner perspective at the centre of our work and also encourage stakeholders to do so.

Improvement-Oriented

We are a learning, developing and evolving organisation, committed to continuously evaluating and improving the quality of our work. This underpins our approaches to assuring and promoting improved quality in further and higher education and training.

Collaborative

We collaborate with our stakeholders to build confidence in and improve the quality of education and training opportunities and the recognition of qualifications.

Independent

Although we work within the broad framework of Governmental policy, we are operationally independent in the performance of our functions and in our decision-making. We operate with integrity and in a transparent, fair, equitable, impartial and objective manner.

Professional

We treat all persons with respect, dignity and courtesy. We work to the highest standards of public service with regard to accountability, effectiveness, responsiveness and efficiency.

4. REPORTING ON PRIORITIES FOR 2013

Priority 1 – Developing a comprehensive set of QQI policies

Policy Development Programme

In 2013 QQI launched a comprehensive policy development programme to roll out the 175 functions of QQI as outlined in the 2012 Act and to consolidate and update the policy suites of the amalgamated bodies. QQI has successfully ensured a cross-sectional and consultative approach to policy development, implementation and review and to identifying wide-reaching interconnected issues for the organisation to address through the policy suite.

Policy Development, Implementation and Review

A methodology for development, implementation and review has been developed and documented by QQI. In summary each policy area goes through six stages over its lifetime:

1. Identification and Prioritisation

The policy areas requiring development are identified and their development planned as part of the QQI policy suite, identifying connections and linkages between policy areas.

2. Green Paper

Green Papers are public consultation documents that outline the issues and options for development of the policy area. They give the background, context and current situation for the policy area.

3. White Paper

Based on the consultation feedback and internal consultation, the Green Paper content is turned into a White Paper. This is proposed draft policy, criteria and principles for the policy area and published for consultation.

4. Policy document

Following consultation a final policy is put to the Board for adoption.

5. Implementation

While developing draft policy, a plan for the implementation of the proposed policy is developed to allow QQI to realise any business changes required. The policy is implemented following its adoption by the Board. This includes communication, resourcing and process requirements.

6. Review

Each policy area is scheduled to be reviewed a certain amount of time following its adoption to ensure that it is still relevant and fit for purpose .

This methodology has been piloted by the programme and is being continuously developed as the programme continues.



Deliverables and Benefits to Date:

In 2013 the policy development programme involved the publication of 18 Green Papers and five White Papers which resulted in the adoption of three QQI Policies to enable QQI to open access to initial validation.

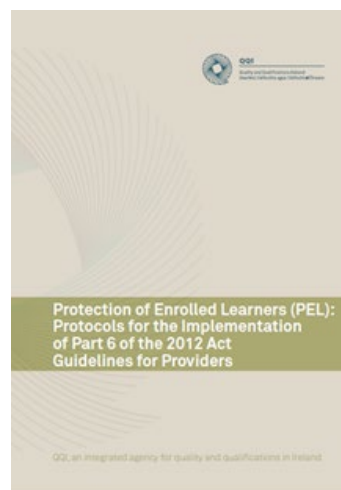
Each of the published Green and White Papers has undergone extensive public consultation with QQI's stakeholders, yielding over 229 submissions from a range of stakeholders across the higher and further education and training sectors. In May 2013, two open consultation events took place in Dublin and Cork to launch the policy development programme consultation. QQI is committed to ensuring openness and transparency to its consultation processes; feedback from formal consultation processes is analysed and published as are the submissions received. A final report on the impact of the consultation processes is published with the final policy.

Upcoming Policy Development Projects:

In 2014 a large number of policy development and implementation projects are planned with more planning and scheduling due for the second half of 2014.

The following policies are currently at different stages of development within the programme:

- Alignment of Qualifications within the NFQ
- Delegation of Authority
- Facilitating the Recognition of Qualifications
- The International Education Mark
- Monitoring and Dialogue
- Public Information on Programmes and Awards
- QQI's Relationship with Professional Recognition Bodies
- Quality Assurance Guidelines
- Re-engagement with Legacy Providers



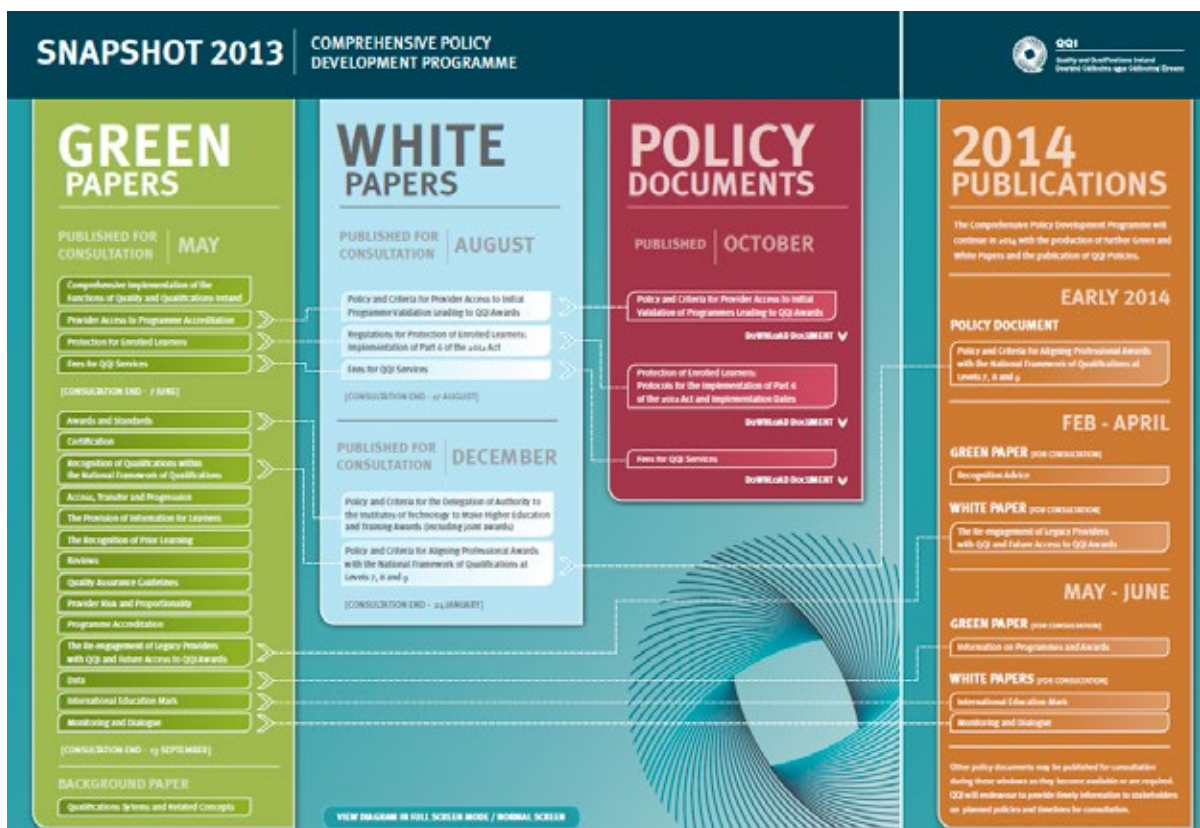
Green Papers Published

- Comprehensive Implementation of the Functions of Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- Provider Access to Programme Accreditation
- Protection of Enrolled Learners
- Fees for QQI services
- Awards and Standards
- Certification

- International Education Mark
- Recognition of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications
- Access, Transfer and Progression
- The Provision of Information for Learners
- The Recognition of Prior Learning
- Reviews
- Quality Assurance Guidelines
- Provider Risk and Proportionality
- Programme Accreditation
- The Re-engagement of Legacy Providers with QQI and Future Access to QQI Awards
- Delegation of Authority

White Papers Published

- Alignment of Qualifications within the NFQ
- Delegation of Authority



Policies adopted in 2013

- Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards
- Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act and Implementation Dates
- Fees for QQI Services

Priority 2 – Maintaining and improving the quality assurance activities of providers of education and training in Ireland

Programme Validations

In 2013 a number of validations were carried out by QQI for higher education and training programmes leading to QQI awards. These applications take a number of formats, for example they can be a first time application by a new provider, a new programme validation application by an existing provider, a revalidation following a programmatic review or programme approval for research degrees.

Validation applications were received from two new providers and processed during this period.

New programme validation applications from 10 existing providers were recommended for approval.

During 2013 there were eight providers who had programmes re-validated following programmatic reviews.

Providers previously registered with FETAC that wish to offer programme(s) leading to QQI awards developed under the Common Awards System (CAS) must first have those programmes validated. A total of 960 further education and training programmes were validated across a broad range of providers.

	Further Education and Training	Higher Education and Training
Programmes validated 2013	960	137 (52 new validations and Springboard programmes, 82 revalidations arising from programmatic review, 3 programme approvals for research degrees)

Review and Enhancement

In 2013 QQI concluded of a number of reviews that had been acquired via the Transition and Savings provisions of the 2012 Act. A summary of this activity is detailed in the table below.

Review Activity in 2013		
Institutional Reviews concluded in 2013	4	3 HETAC Institutional Review final reports 1 Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) final report
Institutional Reviews in progress at end of 2013	1	<i>Report due for publication in 2014</i>
Follow-up Review Reports received	8	2 IRIU follow-up reports 6 HETAC Institutional Review follow-up reports

Review of Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

In October 2013 QQI undertook a review of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). RCSI is confirmed as a designated awarding body in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012. The Report of this review is due to be presented to the QQI Board in April 2014 before publication on the website.

Follow-up to Institutional Review

Under the IRIU and HETAC institutional review processes, institutions are required to prepare a progress report 12 months after the institutional review to inform on progress with the recommendations made. Institutional Review 12-month follow-up reports for eight third level institutes were recommended for approval and published on the website. Follow-up or progress reports were also received by two institutions.

Review of Reviews

Following the merger of the three external QA agencies for higher education, in preparation for the forthcoming development of QQI quality assurance and review policies, and as a direct response to a call from the sector, QQI decided to undertake a review of the legacy agency review models. The Terms of Reference for the review set out two meta-objectives: (i) to evaluate the effectiveness of each institutional review model; (ii) to identify the combined impact of institutional reviews across the sector. In the Terms of Reference these were further subdivided into six key objectives. A Review Team, consisting of three high-profile international experts was appointed in July 2013. The Team was encouraged by QQI to conduct an independent objective analysis of the approaches of the former agencies. The review was established with a focus on consultation with the sector. The Review Team met for a preliminary meeting in August 2013 and subsequently for a planning meeting in early October 2013. Review Team details were published on www.QQI.ie.

A series of meetings for the visit of the Team took place from 11 to 15 November. The Team met a wide range of higher education institutions, representative bodies, student representatives, experts and former reviewers. The Review Team agreed five key questions to be posed at the meetings. These questions were also published in a Consultation Form on the QQI website. Responses to the Form were collated and analysed prior to the commencement of the visit. The report is due to be published in 2014.



Green paper on Reviews

As part of QQI's policy development programme which commenced in 2013, the Green Paper on Reviews was published. This paper explored the possibilities for drawing on the models and experience of institutional review developed by the legacy bodies to serve the statutory review functions of QQI. QQI intends to publish a White Paper on Reviews in 2014.

Monitoring activities and engagements

Further Education and Training (FET)

QQI's monitoring activity carried out under former FETAC legacy processes extended to 186 providers in 2013. This included monitoring of authentication of assessment, learner protection, provider self-evaluations as well as following up on other provider issues. The nature and extent of work involved in each monitoring event varied. The following outcomes were recorded from these monitoring activities: 67% were considered to have effective provision in place; 23% had some minor recommendations proposed; 10% had significant recommendations proposed.

Higher Education and Training (HET)

Monitoring visits and other activities including attending exam board meetings, programmatic reviews and engaging in dialogue with providers were carried out under the former HETAC legacy processes with higher education and training providers.

Under the legacy Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) processes, a template for Annual Institutional Reports (AIR) was issued in 2013 by QQI for the 2012 calendar year. This was completed by each of the nine designated awarding bodies, the seven universities, the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). These individual reports outline the quality assurance activities of each institution in the previous year. Annual Dialogue Meetings (ADM) between staff of QQI and higher education institutions were held during the April to June period. These meetings facilitate discussion between QQI and institutions enabling discourse on issues and topics of mutual interest such as institutional reviews, quality assurance and fees. The meetings provided QQI with an opportunity to highlight QQI developments and in particular the QQI comprehensive policy development process and related consultation activities. A summary report analysing the activities detailed in the AIR for the universities for 2012 was prepared by the executive, presented to the Board and published on the website. Following feedback from these institutions QQI has commenced work to review and enhance the annual reporting process for future years.

International Education – English Language Training (ELT)

The English Language Training (ELT) inspection recognition scheme, governed by the Accreditation and Co-ordination of English Language Services (ACELS) Recognition Committee continued in 2013 and met on the following dates:

- 5 March
- 15 May
- 16 July
- 25 September

-
- 14 November
 - 12 December

During 2013, 27 inspection visits took place with respect to change of ownership, change of management, new premises and additional centres. Due process continued in respect of two ELT organisations for which issues of non-compliance had been identified. As a consequence, recognition was withdrawn from both providers although one of these chose to appeal.

Applications from new providers and monitoring of current courses in respect of the Certificate in English Language Teaching (CELT) and the Preparatory ELT Qualification Certificates (CELT Prep) have continued to be accepted over this period.

Revised ACELS Regulations 2013-2014 along with a new Application Form and Application Guide were prepared for the opening of a temporary 'window' for access to ACELS recognition (17 October 2013– 31 January 2014). All documents were published on the ACELS website in September. All interested organisations were required to submit expressions of interest which brought about an invitation to a briefing. Three briefings were held (October, November, and January) at which over 50 organisations were represented in total. A total of 34 applications were subsequently received by the deadline.

Access to Initial Validation

Initial Validation is the process by which providers of education and training seek to offer programmes leading to QQI awards for the first time. The application process for access to initial validation opened on 17 October 2013.

QQI received a steady stream of enquiries from providers interested in accessing initial validation in 2013. QQI received a steady stream of enquiries from providers interested in accessing initiation validation in 2013. Briefings for interested providers who submitted an Expression of Interest in the Initial Validation Process were held on 30 October and 28 November in Dublin. Of the 28 potential applicants who attended the briefings, two were from the charity and voluntary sector and the rest were from the private education and training sector.

The majority of interested providers wished to offer further education awards at NFQ Level 5 and 6 and just three indicated their intention to offer higher education awards at NFQ Level 7 or above.

The next scheduled briefing is 30 January 2014 and thereafter the briefings will be offered when demand dictates. Up to the end of 2013, no application for initial validation has been received from any provider.

Collaborative Provision, Transnational and Joint Awards

Existing joint awarding agreements in place between the legacy HET Awards Council and the Institute of Technology Carlow and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and their respective collaborative partners were updated and extended to allow for delegation of authority for the arrangements. Devolved responsibility arrangements for the validation of research programmes at NFQ Levels 9 and 10 were agreed with Cork Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tallaght and Limerick Institute of Technology.

In addition, the quality assurance procedures for collaborative and transnational provision were received and recommended to the CEO for approval from four institutions: Athlone Institute of

Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Carlow. Furthermore, the quality assurance procedures for collaborative and transnational provision and joint awarding arrangements were received and recommended to the CEO for approval from five institutions: the Dublin Business School, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tallaght, Limerick Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Sligo.

In May 2013 QQI published a White Paper on the Policy and Criteria for the Delegation of Authority to the Institutes of Technology to Make Higher Education and Training Awards (including joint awards).

Priority 3 – Greater engagement and consultation with stakeholders

Consultation

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 requires QQI to consult with providers, professional recognition bodies, staff and learner representatives, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the State Examinations Commission (SEC), Fáilte Ireland and other persons or bodies the Board considers appropriate in the development of new policies and processes. Regardless of the statutory obligations it is the intention that much of QQI's work will be developed and conducted through consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in order to ensure that the organisation meets its organisational objectives in the most effective manner.

In May 2013 QQI's Framework for Consultation was published. QQI's Consultation Framework underpins the organisation's approach to once-off formal public consultation exercises which are undertaken as part of the development of new policy initiatives or when reviewing existing policies. The framework commits QQI to a number of key actions and phases in conducting formal consultation with stakeholders. A dedicated consultation page was established on the QQI website and all consultative documentation is published there.

The first phase of QQI's comprehensive policy programme was to consult on a range of Green Papers that were developed following an internal study of the issues and options in a range of policy areas. The Green Papers on QQI's Comprehensive Policy Development Programme were offered for public consultation in the week beginning 13 May. To facilitate and enable stakeholders to access and engage with the Green Papers, an interactive PDF file was developed to enable electronic feedback and submissions to be made.

QQI Consultation Event, Dublin 20 May and Cork 28 May 2013

As part of the formal Green Paper consultation phase, two open consultation events were held in Dublin on 20 May and in Cork on 28 May.

Over 380 key stakeholders from the higher and further education systems including universities, institutes of technology, colleges of further education, VECs and private sector course providers gathered for the events. Delegates representative of all aspects of education and industry with further education bodies, higher education bodies as well as industry-specific organisations and agencies were present.



Following the events participants were asked to complete an evaluation sheet seeking their feedback and comments on the arrangements for and effectiveness of the event. The results of this evaluation were made available in the Consultation Events Evaluation Report on the QQI website.

Enterprise Engagement

QQI has engaged continuously with providers and with provider representative groups. This has been particularly important in the context of communication and discussing with providers the anticipated changes to policy and the potential impact of those changes. To that end, QQI has engaged in meetings, briefings, and workshops with providers and institutions and will continue to develop this engagement in 2014.

During 2013 QQI:

- Attended and contributed at a number of conferences, seminars and workshops at home and abroad to further inform itself of the needs of industry and better understand the relationship between education and the world of work
- Made a submission to the Department of Education and Skills regarding the Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland
- Made a range of presentations to visiting international delegations
- Held a number of bilateral meetings with stakeholders
- Commenced participation in a research project on the role of employability in external quality assurance lead by NVAO (the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) and CHEPs (the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies)
- Hosted an ICT Industry Consultation meeting on Level 5 and 6 ICT award standards which are currently under review. The session provided an opportunity for the sector to contribute to the review process and in particular to ensure that the revised awards meet the needs of the labour market.

In 2013 work began on 'A Strategic Approach to Employer Engagement'. A key objective of the Strategic Approach is to promote active employer engagement and entrepreneurship education across both the further and higher education and training sectors. This strategy is to be published in 2014.

Learner Involvement

One of QQI's core values is "Learner-Centred" - putting the learner perspective at the centre of work and encouraging stakeholders to do so. To this end, two learner representatives are members of the QQI board and learners are involved in QQI's evaluative processes. Learner feedback is an explicit requirement of QQI's quality assurance guidelines. All institutional review teams include a student or a student representative and at each review the team meet with students and student representatives. Institutions themselves also involve students in their self-evaluation processes prior to review.

As part of QQI's engagement with Learners, QQI delivered a module on Quality Assurance at the USI Student Union Training Event in Waterford Institute of Technology, in July 2013. QQI also had a number of engagement meetings with learner representative bodies.

Priority 4 – Improving QCI services to learners

Protection of Enrolled Learners

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) is a requirement for all providers offering programmes of three months duration or longer, where fees are charged (with the exception of certain public providers expressly exempt under the legislation). As per the Act (2012) interim requirements for PEL were developed and published, and a communication developed and issued to providers on 1 July 2013. These pertained to existing providers transitioned from the former awards councils, some of whom were not required previously to have PEL arrangements in place. Legal advice on interpretation of the new legislative requirements in this area was sought and interpretations were made.



A White Paper on the new QCI policy for Protection of Enrolled Learners was published for consultation in early August. The final policy 'Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act' was approved by the Board in September 2013 and published on 9 October 2013. Additional guidelines for providers on the implementation of the PEL protocols, pro forma application documents and operating principles for the PEL arrangements of providers were also developed and published to the QCI website. Internally, a PEL Advisory Group was established, comprising members of the executive, for an interim period of 6-12 months to review PEL arrangements submitted by providers and establish a "QCI position" on the kinds of PEL arrangements that will be deemed as acceptable in the long run.

Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP)

Green Paper

QCI's core output with regards to ATP in 2013 was the proposal of a Policy Green Paper, situating the current practices within the new legislation and acknowledging our role in supporting participation in lifelong learning through the development of transparent, coherent pathways. The 2012 Act strengthens requirements for access, transfer and progression, connecting it clearly with the recognition of prior learning, credit accumulation and information for learners. Each of these areas also was addressed in Policy Green Papers.

Progression Routes for QCI Further Education and Training (FET) Awards

The 2012 Act strongly increases the obligation on education and training providers to effectively and publicly promote the issue of articulation within Irish education and training.

FETAC awards (now awarded by QCI) continue to create opportunities for progression from further to higher education and training. The publication 'Progression Opportunities for 2013' outlines the scheme whereby learners can use their QCI FET awards to apply through the CAO system for a place on a higher education course.



The new scoring system was agreed in 2012 by the higher education institution representative bodies, for implementation in 2013. The publication was issued to all providers as it outlines the new scoring system which applies to grades achieved in QQI FET awards, following the introduction of CAS. The new scoring system was agreed by the Higher Education Institutions representative bodies in 2012 for implementation in 2013. A workshop on the new arrangements was hosted at the Institute of Guidance Counsellors annual seminar in March. In addition, the Careers Portal developed an online QQI FET awards points calculator for learners. Higher Education institutes continue to use the scheme and to revise arrangements taking account of the wider range of awards now available.

Communicating the Recognition Service

A new Qualifications Recognition leaflet 'Recognising Foreign Qualifications in Ireland' was designed with the purpose of guiding both individual international award-holders and those presented with such awards to the recognition service website. Both leaflets are published on www.qualrec.ie and were circulated in a mailshot to a wide variety of stakeholders from Qualifications Services in December 2013.

The existing leaflet entitled 'Travelling With Your Irish Qualification?' was updated to reflect the establishment of QQI. This leaflet provides an overview on how to get your Irish qualification recognised abroad, whether you have a professional qualification which is required to work in certain regulated professions or you intend to further your studies abroad.



Provision of Information

The provision of information for learners was considered in a Policy Green Paper, as the 2012 Act imposes obligations on all providers (including those that do not have or seek any other direct or indirect relationship with QQI) to provide certain information to learners. Issues identified are indicative of both the scope of QQI's responsibilities, but also of the complexity of the access, transfer and progression arena generally.

The quality of information provided to learners is in part met through QQI policy on data provision, and in part through actions arising from for example, validation, monitoring and quality assurance generally. Currently QQI has responsibility for Qualifax, a national programmes and awards database widely used by guidance services and general enquirers. In 2013 QQI consolidated the ICT platforms for Qualifax, bringing greater stability and efficiency for service users. Qualifax continued to harvest provider's information on over 20,000 courses and to provide reliable data-feeds to a range of other information providers, including Ploteus (Portal on Learning).

PLOTEUS

PLOTEUS is an EU portal which aims to help students, job seekers, workers, parents, guidance counsellors and teachers to find out information about studying in Europe. During 2013 we updated and refreshed all promotional material relating to PLOTEUS.

Recognition of Prior Learning

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is given impetus by the Council of the European Union's Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. Consideration of RPL provoked lively discussion during the Presidency Conference hosted by QQI in March. QQI also participated in a survey, Partnerships for Lifelong Learning, conducted on behalf of CEDEFOP, by the University of Bremen and was interviewed for the Country Report of the European Inventory on the Recognition of formal and non-formal Learning in Ireland, to be finalised in 2014. QQI received and responded to a range of learner queries in relation to the recognition of their prior learning, connecting individuals to appropriate providers where possible.

Qualifications Recognition Service

QQI facilitates the recognition of qualifications through its Qualifications Recognition service. This service provides a range of functions and activities that are designed to improve the recognition of qualifications in Ireland and that of Irish qualifications abroad.

The table below provides a summary of activity with regard to the recognition of qualifications in 2013.

Summary of Qualifications Recognition Activity: Year 2013

- Number of queries received: 2,100 (email); Phone 1,500 (estimated)
- Formal Applications to Qualifications Recognition in 2013 = 1,905
- Website traffic: 64,514 Unique Visitors: (Number of visitors from different Internet Protocol (IP) addresses. However, depending on how computers are networked, certain organisations may operate all computers from one IP address.)

Europass

QQI is the National Europass Centre and has been promoting Europass extensively in 2013. Europass is an EU initiative supporting mobility for learners and transparency of qualifications, through the use of standardised templates to communicate skills, knowledge and qualifications.

In 2013 Europass Ireland established a Facebook page in line with many European National Europass Centres. In addition, articles were published in a variety of stakeholders' publications and Europass was represented at a range of events including the National Ploughing Championships, Higher Options and the National Youthreach Coordinators conference. A number of online competitions were held



to promote awareness and to encourage use of the CV template. All Europass promotional materials were also updated during this period.

On-line Certificate Supplements for 223 CAS Level 5 and 6 major, special purpose and supplemental awards were developed during 2013. Driven as a requirement for Europass, the Certificate Supplements are due for publication in 2014.

National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)

QQI is the representative body for Ireland on the European Network of Information Centres and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC/NARIC) network. Qualifications Recognition, the unit which manages this work, has continued to be an active member of the European ENIC-NARIC network through regular participation in meetings and contributions to an online discussions forum. The Irish NARIC currently acts as a supporting partner in the following four NARIC projects which started in February 2012 and will run for a period of two years, namely:

- (i) EU Area of Recognition (EAR) 2 –best practice for recognition (ends August 2014)
- (ii) EAR-HEI – recognition decisions with HEIs (ends March 2014)
- (iii) Evaluation and Assessment of the Role of NARICs (EARN) (ends March 2014)
- (iv) Changing role of NARICs (ends March 2014)

QQI was elected to the NAB (NARIC Advisory Board) in June 2013 and was involved in the development of a work plan for this governing body of the ENIC-NARIC Network in late 2013. A meeting of the ENIC Bureau and NAB took place in October 2013 to discuss this work plan and to begin discussions on the agenda for the annual ENIC-NARIC meeting to be held in Rome in July 2014. The European Commission's call for NARIC projects to be funded under Erasmus+ was also discussed and priorities agreed.

At the annual NARIC meeting on 3 December 2013 in Brussels, QQI participated and co-chaired a question and answer session following presentation of progress reports on current NARIC projects.

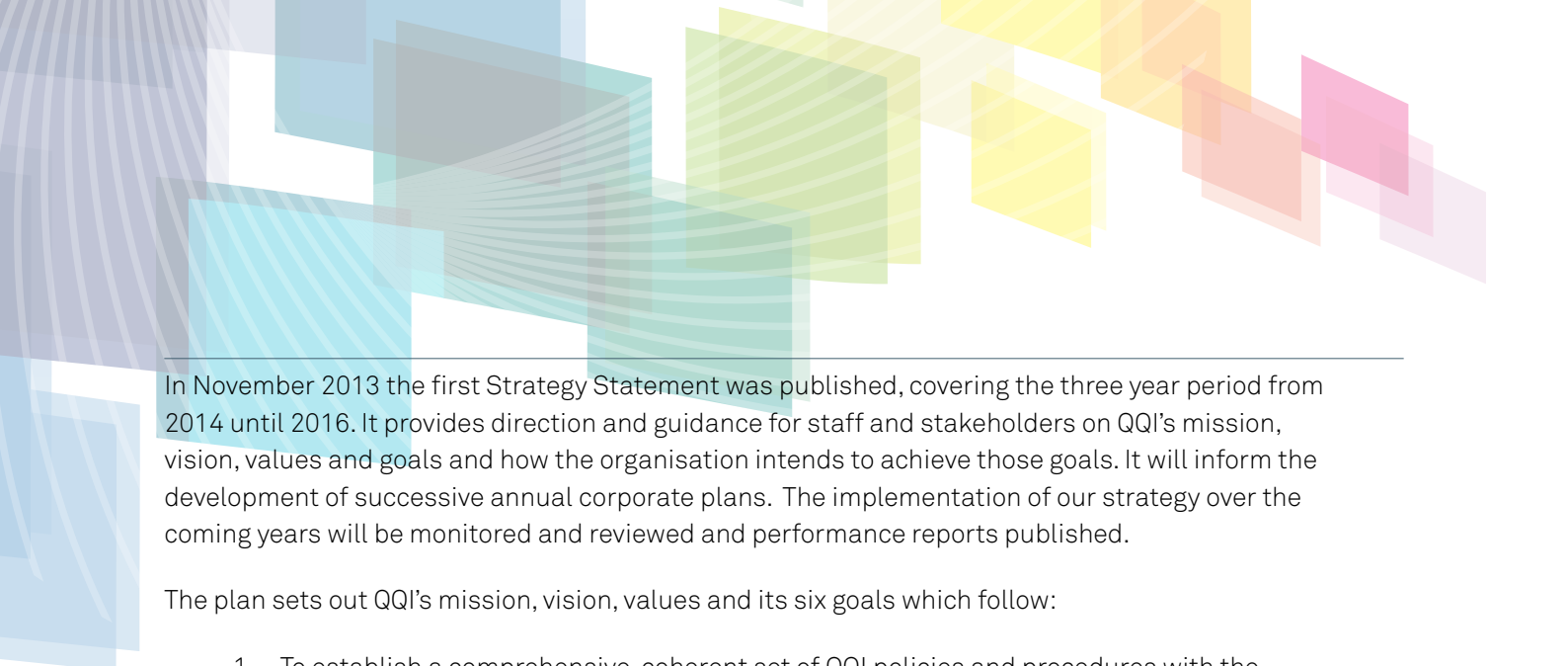
Priority 5 – Building Internal Capacity

QQI Strategy

From early 2013, the QQI Board and Executive worked to develop QQI's first Strategy Statement through workshops, discussions and meetings of advisory and working groups. A 'Draft Strategy Statement 2014 – 2016' was approved by the Board in 2013.

The Draft Strategy Statement was circulated extensively for external consultation to Government departments, state agencies and providers and representative bodies in education and training. QQI was very pleased with the quantity and quality of feedback received. The Draft Strategy Statement was revised to address the key issues raised as a result of external consultation.





In November 2013 the first Strategy Statement was published, covering the three year period from 2014 until 2016. It provides direction and guidance for staff and stakeholders on QQI's mission, vision, values and goals and how the organisation intends to achieve those goals. It will inform the development of successive annual corporate plans. The implementation of our strategy over the coming years will be monitored and reviewed and performance reports published.

The plan sets out QQI's mission, vision, values and its six goals which follow:

1. To establish a comprehensive, coherent set of QQI policies and procedures with the National Framework of Qualifications as a central organising feature
2. To prioritise learners in our policies and actions and in our relations with stakeholders
3. To quality assure providers and support the enhancement of the quality of education and training provision
4. To collaborate with stakeholders to create greater coherence within Ireland's education and training systems and with its qualifications system
5. To provide relevant, timely and comprehensive information to the public on the quality of education and training provision and qualifications
6. To build an organisational culture to enable QQI to perform successfully

Project Office

The Programme Management Office defines and maintains standards for programme management within the organisation.

The primary goal of a Programme Management Office is to achieve organisational benefits from standardising and following programme and project management policies, processes and methods. The Programme Management Office is a source for guidance, documentation, and metrics related to the practices involved in managing and implementing programmes within the organisation.

Some of the programmes and projects undertaken by QQI in 2013 include

- ICT Programme
- Comprehensive Policy Development Programme
- Communications Strategy Project
- Change Management Development Programme
- European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) Project
- International Education Mark (IEM) Project
- Internal Quality Assurance for QAS Project

Information and Communications Technology

During 2013 QQI engaged in a range of activities to improve the quality of service for internal and external stakeholders. A new programme management group was established to provide governance for the many IT projects which are in progress.

A significant piece of work for 2013 was the integration of the legacy FETAC and HETAC IT systems into QQI's Business System, QBS. QBS supports several key business processes including managing providers, certification, awards and standards and programme validation. In addition to managing business transactions, QBS provides a wide range of reports to support business activities and provides the backend database for the directories of providers, programmes and awards.

Other key projects in 2013 were as follows:

- Qualifax was migrated to a new platform and software and hardware components were replaced or updated to provide a more resilient and reliable infrastructure. The benefits of the migration were made evident during the peak business period when no performance issues were raised by users.
- An interim system to support initial access to programme validation for new providers was developed.
- Several applications systems inherited from the legacy bodies are in the process of integration into QQI's main systems. A number of websites have been moved to more secure hosting.
- Work commenced on identifying the system changes required to enable QQI to provide programmes and qualifications data to the Portal on learning opportunities throughout the European space (PLOTEUS). This project is underway.
- ICT worked with the Certification Business Unit to provide data to CAO in a new format to support the increasing uptake by learners of CAS awards.
- On-going support was provided for the key certification period in May to enable the speedy and efficient collection of results for some 70,000 learners.

Significant work was also undertaken to improve IT infrastructure in QQI including:

- An internal security review was undertaken as preparation for an external security review during 2014.
- In the last quarter of 2013 work commenced on identifying QQI's requirements for its website presence to meet its needs over the next two years. The updated website will be released mid-2014.
- A major upgrade to the hardware infrastructure in the data centres was undertaken to enable QQI to provide a better service to the users of its systems.



Human Resources (HR)

QQI developed a number of HR policies and procedures which were approved by the Board in 2013. These include e-working, recruitment and selection, training and development, grievance and disciplinary procedures.

From 1 July 2013 a number of measures contained in the Haddington Road Agreement were implemented such as

- pay reductions for staff earning in excess of €65k
- increase in the working week
- deferral of increments
- reductions in annual leave

Since 2010 public sector employee numbers have been reducing in accordance with Government policy. In this regard, an Employment Control Framework (ECF) was developed by Government that sets the upper limit for employees in departments and agencies across the public service. An ECF ceiling of 78 employees was determined for QQI to be achieved by year end 2013, a reduction of seven employees from the 2012 ceiling of 85. This was achieved through the non-filling of vacancies and the reduction of whole-time equivalents. This represents a 21% reduction since 2009.

Communications

An overall communications strategy was developed and was presented to the Board and key internal audiences in September 2013. This strategy laid out the communications objectives, messages and activities for 2013 and served as a reference point for any external communications initiatives during this period.

A series of strategic communications workshops were devised and delivered to managers and staff over a period from July through to September 2013. Central to these training sessions was the creation of a cohort of spokespeople for and on behalf of QQI and the agreement of spokespeople protocols. A crisis planning and response protocol was also developed and implemented.

In July 2013, QQI commenced a review of its internal communications and also a review of its culture, values and behaviours. Following the outcomes of these reviews, a comprehensive communications programme 'One QQI' was developed, focusing on building an organisational culture within QQI that will form the foundation of the organisation going forward. One QQI will be delivered internally over a period of five months, commencing early 2014.

Following a tendering process, QQI worked closely with an appointed design team throughout the year developing a sub-brand logo to be utilised across the many areas of QQI's work. A variety of design concepts have been produced and these are being fine-tuned and will be available for use in 2014.

During 2013 work began on developing an information architecture for the new QQI website which will meet the needs of the organisation for 2014 and beyond.

Targeted communications to providers in the form of e-zines continued in 2013, with three issues circulated to all providers in April, October and December.

Priority 6 – Maintaining and supporting a qualifications system with qualifications that are widely valued nationally and internationally

Awards Standards Development

Part of QQI's role is to determine the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by QQI itself or by providers of education and training programmes to which it has delegated authority to make awards.

QQI inherited the awards standards determined by FETAC (the Common Awards System and certain other awards standards being phased out) and by HETAC.

Following amalgamation in November 2012 QQI had essentially suspended new standards development until autumn 2013 when it published 'Guidelines and Criteria for Proposing the Development of New Award Standards or Review of Existing Ones'.

Since then review and development work has been scheduled on the basis of QQI's opinion of the relative priorities.

The following awards standards were published for consultation in 2013:

- Draft HET Awards Standards for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- Draft FET Awards Standards for IT Awards at Levels 5 and 6

New development work was initiated on the following award standards in 2013 and it is expected that these will be published in 2014:

- Draft HET Awards Standards for English language teaching (NFQ) Levels 6-9
- Draft FET Award Standard for Supervisory Management in Manufacturing (NFQ) Level 6
- Draft FET Award Standard for Maths for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) (NFQ) Level 5

Transition of the former Common Awards System (CAS) to QQI

FETAC commenced a project in June 2008 to migrate existing awards into the Common Awards System (CAS). Many stakeholders including the former awarding bodies participated actively in this project. IVEA, FÁS, Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc among others were involved. QQI essentially completed the migration process in 2013. By the end of 2013 only the Information Technology awards at Levels 5 and 6 remained to be migrated.

The migration process has now ended. All future additions or changes to CAS awards specifications will be handled as review or new development. The publication in 2013 'Guidelines and Criteria for Proposing the Development of New Award Standards or Review of Existing Ones' allows for proposals for development of new award standards where a gap is identified.

Professional Recognition Bodies (PRB)

In 2013 QQI published a 'White Paper: Policy and Criteria for Aligning Professional Awards with the National Framework of Qualifications at Levels 7, 8 and 9'. This paper sets out Policy and Criteria for recognising Professional Awards within the National Framework of Qualifications (Framework or

NFQ). It applies to Professional recognition bodies which have a function in relation to the regulation of professions (such as nursing and engineering) under European Union Directives for the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

It was anticipated that all professional awards aligned under previous policies would have to be submitted for re-alignment under the new terms.

During 2013 work started on the translation of 'Professional Award-Type Descriptors (Award Class: Professional) for the Alignment of Professional Awards at NFQ Levels 7, 8 and 9' for use in the alignment of professional qualifications in accountancy.

Certification

As QQI has taken over the functions of the former awarding bodies FETAC and HETAC, it continues to make awards based on the standards developed by these legacy organisations while its own award standards and processes are under development. In 2013 QQI certified learning taking place across the further and higher education and training sector in Ireland. These awards, now offered by QQI continue to hold the same currency and value as before and are recognised nationally and internationally.

There were 155,000 further education awards in 2013 (The figures below show the number of recipients by award type). There were also 4,000 award recipients who received higher education and training awards directly from QQI in 2013.

QQI-FETAC		Number of all awards, broken out by award type*		
Level	Major	Minor	Special Purpose	Supplemental
1	363	776	0	0
2	894	4755	0	0
3	2023	36143	11	0
4	1066	30162	767	0
5	24557	130775	10530	0
6	7413	20874	2674	695
QQI-HETAC **		Number of all awards made directly by QQI, broken out by award type		
6	258	295	1009	0
7	768	67	389	0
8	2398	165	418	0
9	602	186	36	0

*Component certs contain on average 2 minors

** HETAC numbers on certification are provisional and have to be confirmed

English Language Certification

English Language Certification: January to June 2013	
Certificate in English Language Training (CELT)	387
CELT for Qualified Teachers (CELT Prep)	394
Test of Interactive English (Ireland)	525
Test of Interactive English (Greece)	2,956

Priority 7 –Contributing to European and International initiatives to improve the quality of education and training

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)

QQI is the National Contact Point for the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and represents Ireland on the EQF Advisory Group established by the 2008 EQF Recommendation as the main instrument for governing the EQF. By the end of 2013, 21 member states had referenced their national qualifications frameworks to the EQF. QQI participated actively in all five meetings of the advisory group and a number of related peer learning activities. Particular focusses of Irish inputs were around working across different sectors of education and training, quality assurance, international qualifications and relations with countries outside Europe. In 2013 the mandate of the Advisory Group was extended to include monitoring the implementation of the 2012 European Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning and QQI was appointed as the national representative. QQI also represents Ireland on the maintenance committee for ESCO (European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations), the new European taxonomy tool.

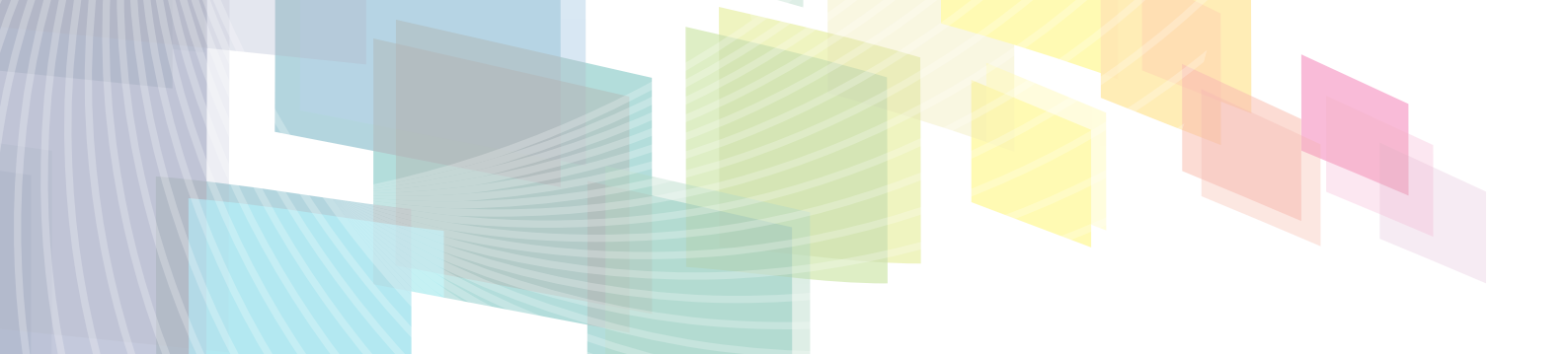
European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

The Bologna Process led to the declaration of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010. As well as participating in the national Bologna steering group, QQI represents Ireland on the Work Group on Structural Reforms (qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition and transparency instruments). This group is charged with supporting the implementation of these key elements of the Bologna reforms and making recommendations to the next meeting of EHEA ministers of higher education in Yerevan in 2015. QQI is also responsible for Ireland's participation in the associated networks of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks and of experts on the recognition of prior learning.

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Training (ENQA)

Dr Padraig Walsh, Chief Executive of QQI and Board member of ENQA since 2011 was elected President of ENQA at the 4th General Assembly that was held in Vilnius on 29-30 October 2013. In this capacity, he also represents ENQA at the meetings of the E4 Group (EUA, EURASHE, ESU and ENQA), the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the BFUG Structural Reforms Working Group.

ENQA is an umbrella organisation for external quality assurance agencies which represents its members at the European level and internationally, especially in political decision making processes and in co-operation with stakeholder organisations. Membership is based on agencies demonstrating compliance with the 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area' following an external review every five years.



The Association aims to maintain and enhance the quality of European higher education at a high level, and to act as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna signatory countries. ENQA contributes to this goal especially by promoting European co-operation in the field of quality assurance in higher education and disseminating information and expertise among its members and towards stakeholders in order to develop and share good practice and to foster the European dimension of quality assurance.

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)

As it is the new legal entity following the amalgamation, QQI has taken over the contract with the Commission to host and support the EQAVET project. The contract was for a three year period from Jan 2010 and renewed thereafter on an annual basis for a further 3 years up to the end of 2015.

EQAVET is a community of practice which promotes European collaboration in quality assurance for VET. The overall goal of EQAVET is to support Member States, social partners and the European Commission's efforts towards improving quality assurance in VET, promoting the use of the EQAVET Framework and increasing the performance and attractiveness of VET in the EU.

The major successes in 2013 have been:

- Increased emphasis on policy processes in EU and Member States which highlight the importance of the underpinning role of quality assurance in VET in contributing to high quality VET.
- The effective implementation of the EQAVET Reference Framework by focusing on national implementation actions/plans and the formulation of practical tools to facilitate implementation.
- The coherence between the quality assurance dimension of EQF and ECVET (the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training) and EQAVET through the establishment of an appropriate expert group with a clear mandate.
- The participation of 26 countries in the annual forum in 2013, which discussed the future strategic direction of the network based on the interim results of the external evaluation and the Secretariat Survey 2012.
- The results of the Secretariat Survey 2012 show us that 23 EU-28 countries have developed a national approach to quality assurance in line with the EQAVET Framework by 2012. A further nine countries are currently preparing their approach.
- The formal establishment of 27 national reference points and five countries where existing organisations are performing this role.
- 20 national VET systems in the EU-27 are taking measures and making progress towards the quality assurance related strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué¹, which encourage countries to take adequate measures to implement the EQAVET Recommendation and making progress towards national quality assurance frameworks

¹ Communiqué of the European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission, meeting in Bruges on 7 December 2010 to review the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-2020.

for VET by 2014; and to establish a national framework for quality assurance for VET institutions –which can also be applied to workplace learning- compatible with the EQAVET Recommendation.

EU Presidency Conference on Quality Assurance in Qualifications Frameworks

Dublin Castle, 12 and 13 March 2013

In March 2013 QQI hosted its first international conference as part of the EU presidency. The aim of the conference was to explore how qualifications frameworks and quality assurance arrangements can best work together at a national and European level in order to achieve the goals of reform in education across the EU and within its member states.

It explored four principle themes:

1. Integrating quality assurance and qualifications frameworks to improve education and training systems.
2. Using quality assurance and qualifications frameworks to improve the labour market relevance of qualifications.
3. Quality assurance and qualifications frameworks facilitating the validation of non-formal and informal learning.
4. Promoting confidence in Europe’s qualifications on a global scale.



Over 150 delegates from across the EU and other global regions, came together to discuss, debate and ultimately contribute to the production of a report and statement, which would be used to inform policy and reflection at a European and national level. The Conference Statement is a contribution towards the further development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and diverse National Frameworks of Qualifications integrating quality assurance systems within development.

The Conference findings can be found the QQI website.

EQArep Project

QQI is one of four partners in an EU-funded ENQA-led project entitled ‘Transparency of European higher education through public quality assurance reports’ (EQArep). The two-year project started on 1 October 2012 and will end on 30 September 2014. The project’s overall aim is to develop European standards for quality assurance reports. To date QQI has participated in a range of project activities including a survey and workshop on stakeholders’ demands for transparency and a survey and workshop on publication of QA results: purpose, structure and content.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

In October 2013 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding and an Information Sharing Agreement to share information and promote understanding of the quality and reputation of higher education in Ireland and the UK.



5. GOVERNANCE

QQI Board

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) describes the composition of the Authority (hereafter and normally referred to as ‘the Board’) which governs Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

The Board members are:

- Mr Gordon Clark (Chair)
- Dr Pádraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Dr Barbara Brittingham (International expert)
- Ms Una Buckley (Learner representative)
- Dr Margaret Cullen (Chairperson, Audit Committee)
- Ms Mary Danagher
- Dr Ann Louise Gilligan
- Ms Joanne Harmon
- Mr James Moore
- Ms Cat O’Driscoll (USI nomination)

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies sets out a corporate governance best practice framework which the Government has put in place for State Bodies. The Board adopted the Code as part of its corporate governance system at its meeting on 1 March 2013. The governance of QQI operates under two strands; business governance and provider relations governance.

In 2013 the Board met on the following dates:

- 1 March 2013
- 21 March 2013
- 22 April 2013
- 10 June 2013
- 29 July 2013
- 9 September 2013
- 18 November 2013
- 17 December 2013

Board members have further participated in Board committee meetings, consultation events and QQI events associated with the Irish Presidency in 2013.

Record of Attendance by Board Members at 2013 QQI Board Meetings

	1 March	21 March	22 April	10 June	29 July	9 Sept	18 Nov	17 Dec
Gordon Clark (Chairperson)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Padraig Walsh	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barbara Brittingham	✓	✓			✓	✓		
Una Buckley	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Margaret Cullen	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓**	✓	✓
Mary Danagher		✓		✓			✓	✓
Ann-Louise Gilligan***	✓	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Joanne Harmon	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
John Logue*		✓		✓	-	-	-	-
James Moore	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cat O'Driscoll*	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓

* The term of office for the USI representative runs from 1 July to 30 June each year.

** Attended Meeting via phone conference

*** On medical leave of absence

Board Member Payments

Board Member	Expenses (€)
Gordon Clark - Chairman	0
Padraig Walsh – Chief Executive	7,743.53*
Barbara Brittingham	5,565.30
Una Buckley	0
Margaret Cullen	0
Mary Danagher	481.90
Joanne Harmon	2,829.67
Anne Louise Gilligan	0
John Logue (finished June 2013)	0
James Moore	1,097.00
Cat O'Driscoll (joined July 2013)	0

Members of the Board of QQI act entirely in a voluntary capacity and no fees were paid to members of the Board in 2013. Expenses include the following categories: accommodation, flights, taxis and sundry items. Board members' travel and subsistence expenses are paid in accordance with rates set by the Department of Finance.



Remuneration and expenses of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive received salary payments of €138,621 in 2013. No bonus payments were made to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive incurred expenses* (cash and credit card) of €7,743.53 in 2013. Expenses include the following categories: accommodation, subsistence (vouched), rail travel, flights, taxis and sundry items. Of these expenses, €5,150.82 were recouped by QQI from third parties.

Audit Committee

To ensure good governance practice an Audit Committee was appointed by the Board in March and the Terms of Reference under which it operates were approved. The Committee consists of two Board members (one who has recent and relevant governance experience) and also one external member. The Head of Audit and Procurement also attends each meeting. The purpose of this Committee is to ensure that there are appropriate internal financial and management controls in place within the organisation. The Committee met on the following dates:

- 15 March 2013
- 27 March 2013
- 23 May 2013
- 3 October 2013
- 6 November 2013

The members of the Committee are:

- Margaret Cullen, Board Member and Chair of the Committee
- James Moore, Board Member
- Colin Maynard, External Member with financial experience

Following consideration of the material submitted to the Board, the Audit Committee recommended the following Internal Audit Reports and Policies to the Board for its consideration and approval:

Internal Audit Reports and Reviews

- Revenue Cycle audit
- Data Protection audit
- System of Internal Financial Control (SIFC) audit
- Procurement Activity Review

Policies

- Policy on System of Internal Financial Controls
- Data Protection policy

The Audit Committee, in accordance with recommended practice under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, issued an invitation to the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General to meet with the Committee at its meeting to be held in spring 2014. The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General indicated that it will accept the invitation.

The Audit Committee agreed a Schedule of Meetings for 2014. The Audit and Procurement section provides the Secretariat service to the Audit Committee.

QQI Sub-Board Governance Structures

Sub-Board committee structures were under development since the start of 2013. The internal QQI Governance Working Group and the Board agreed proposals and implementation plans for the following sub-Board committee structures:

- Programmes and Awards Executive Committee
- Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee
- Policies and Standards Committee
- Approvals and Reviews Committee

Each of the Committees has a specific mission and purpose, which includes making decisions, making recommendations and making observations relating to the particular QQI activities and work areas with which they are tasked. The Terms of Reference for each Committee were approved by the Board in 2013.

A brief description of the mission and purpose of each Committee is outlined below.

Programmes and Awards Executive Committee

The mission of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) is to perform such of the Board's functions as to ensure that programmes and the awards to which they lead are recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and are appropriate and consistent.

The decisions and recommendations of the Committee are informed by external expertise and recommendations, normally provided in the form of external panel reports and the outcomes of monitoring and review activities carried out by QQI.

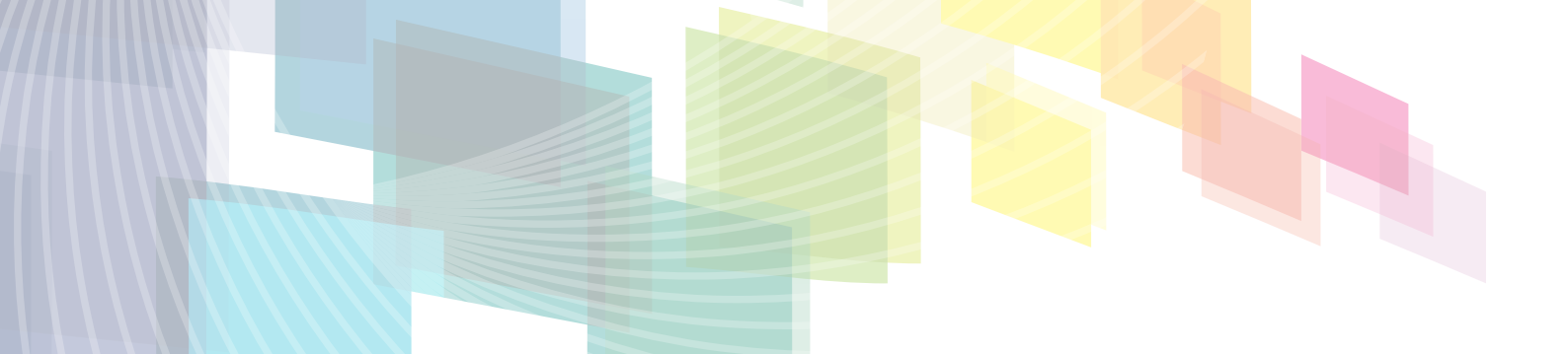
The PAEC was convened in October and December 2013.

Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee

The mission of the Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee is to review and analyse the activities of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee, and on that basis to provide advice and make recommendations to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee on the fulfilment of its mission. It will also confirm or reject decisions of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee, as required. Members of the Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee will be appointed in January 2014 and the Committee will convene for the first time in April 2014.

Policies and Standards Committee

The mission of the Policies and Standards Committee is to apply its expertise to considering QQI draft policy and make recommendations to the Board regarding the approval of these policies in line with the organisation's strategy. It will also consider and may act on recommendations from the



executive to determine standards of knowledge, skill and competence for education and training awards or to endorse subject guidelines concerning knowledge, skill and competence which are expected for higher education awards. Members of the Policies and Standards Committee will be appointed in January 2014 and the Committee will convene for the first time in March 2014.

Approvals and Reviews Committee

The mission of the Approvals and Reviews Committee is to perform such of the Board's functions as to ensure that providers, to which it grants access to external quality assurance, the International Education Mark, and delegated authority, have met and continue to meet, the associated criteria. Members of the Approvals and Reviews Committee will be appointed mid-2014.

Consultative Forum

The Terms of Reference for QQI's Consultative Forum were approved by the Board in 2013. This Forum is to be a representative structure comprising of members from the education, training and employment sectors in Ireland. The Consultative Forum will provide a comprehensive consultation and dialogue environment between QQI and stakeholders. It is envisaged that the Forum will advise QQI on a range of issues regarding its work and in particular, its impact on the education and training and qualifications system.

QQI will contact stakeholders in January 2014 in order to seek nominations to the Consultative Forum with a view to convening its first meeting in April 2014.

Interim Advisory Group

The Interim Advisory Group was established under policy carried through from the previous activities of the Legacy Agencies. Its inaugural meeting was held on 6 December 2012. The Committee met three times in 2013 and was responsible for approval of programme validation applications, consideration of programmatic reviews, institutional reviews and agreement of QA procedures for collaborative, transnational and joint awards. The Interim Advisory Group held its final meeting 25 June 2013 and was replaced by a number of sub-board committees established by the Board in the second half of 2013.

Guide to QQI Governance

Work began in 2013 on QQI's 'Guide to QQI Governance', which will provide a thorough explanation regarding how the QQI Board and Sub-Board Committee structures operate. This guide will be published in 2014.

Governance Forum

The Audit and Procurement section provides the Secretariat to the Board and senior staff in respect of QQI's membership of the Governance Forum at the Institute of Governance Forum. The Governance Forum promotes good governance in the public interest and provides advice, training, information and supports on good governance for its members who come from across the public sector. Recent themes addressed by the Forum include the role of audit committees, risk management and assurance arrangements, reputation management and governance issues around agency rationalisations. Briefings on Service Level Agreements and pensions governance were included in the 2013 programme.

QQI attended a number of Governance Forum events in 2013 including:

- Economic Governance – the role of the Troika
- Service Level Agreements
- Governance of specialist areas – IT, outsourcing of shared services
- Pensions governance



6. CORPORATE MATTERS

Audit and Procurement

Closing off of Legacy Agencies Cessation Accounts

- The 2012 annual accounts of NQAI and HETAC were signed off in December 2013. Clearance of the 2011 and 2012 annual accounts of FETAC was outstanding at 31 December 2013; it is anticipated that this process will be completed in Spring 2014.
- Legacy Bank Accounts have been closed and balances have been transferred to the QQI Bank Accounts.
- [Annual reports](#) for each of the Legacy Agencies have been produced and published.

External Audit Function

The Audit and Procurement section continued to liaise with the external auditors, and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, to assist the finalisation of the cessation accounts of the former legacy agencies HETAC, FETAC and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI).

Internal Audit Function

The internal audit function continues to implement the 3-Year Internal Audit Plan which had been agreed with the Audit Committee and the Board. The internal audit function conducted and presented three internal audit reports to the Audit Committee reported above. Preparations were underway at year-end for an ICT Security and Control internal audit.

Procurement

QQI, as a public body, adheres to best practice in public procurement to which it is committed as set out in the Purchasing and Procurement policy.

Four public procurement tender competitions were conducted under the management of the Audit and Procurement section during 2013, as follows:

- Cleaning Services
- Change Management Development Programme
- Internal Audit services
- Accounting services

A review report on this procurement activity was presented to the Audit Committee in the final quarter of 2013.

Risk Management

The Audit and Procurement Section is responsible for developing and managing the Risk Management function in QQI. The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies requires each state body to appoint a Chief Risk Officer and the Head of Audit and Procurement is the designated Chief Risk Officer of QQI.

The QQI Risk Management Framework and Risk Management Policy documents were approved by the Board in June and are being implemented.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 govern the processing of all personal data in order to safeguard the privacy rights of individuals regarding the processing of their personal data by those who control such data. The Acts provide for the collection and use of data in a responsible way, and provide against unwanted or harmful uses of the data.

QQI is subject to a demanding regulatory framework and the Internal Audit function contributes to providing assurance over the level of compliance and assists in ensuring that QQI has adequate arrangements in place to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Acts.

A QQI specific Data Protection Policy addressing the eight Rules of Data Protection is now in place.

One data protection request for access to information was received in 2013 and was processed in accordance with requirements of the Data Protection Acts.

Finance

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General concluded the Audits of the 2012 HETAC, FETAC and NQAI cessation accounts during 2013 and has certified the HETAC and NQAI accounts by the year end. The Finance Unit continued to streamline the payments process including compliance with SEPA. This has meant payments are done by batch process with automated email notifications. Work on an automated purchase order requisition application was commenced in 2013 and is scheduled to be completed by end first quarter 2014. The chart of accounts was configured to progress the implementation of devolved budgets in 2014 and associated reporting.

Summary of 2013 Financial Results

QQI's first statutory financial statements covering the 14 months period from establishment date 6 November 2012 to 31 December 2013 are at the time of writing, being audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The financial statements together with the Comptroller and Auditor General's report will be published by QQI immediately thereafter.

During the 14 months period, the Authority received Exchequer grant funding of €6.78m. Non-Exchequer income received during the period amounted to €5.1m, out of which €0.82m represented funding from the EU Commission for specific projects administered by the Authority. Total income for the 14 month period was €14.19m.

Pay costs for the 14 month period amounted to €8.71m. Non-pay costs were €6.89m for the same period.

Non-pay expenditure includes Accommodation costs of €0.96m, Board costs of €0.01m, Corporate Services and Communications costs of €0.58m, Qualification and Quality Assurance services costs of €0.19m, EU Project Expenditure of €0.49m, Central Administration costs of €3.55m and Depreciation charges of €1.11m. These costs cover the 14 month period from date of establishment to 31 December 2014.

7. APPENDICES

QQI Participation in National and International Networks

7 Jan 2013	European University Association – Institutional Evaluation Programme (EUA-IEP) group meeting* (Brussels, Belgium)
16 Jan	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) Steering Group meeting* (Brussels)
21 – 22 Jan	The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) workshop to agencies undergoing an external review (Paris, France)
28 Jan	UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UKQCHE) Steering Group meeting* (London)
29 – 30 Jan	UK IE framework coordination group (Five Country group)* (Glasgow, Scotland)
31 Jan	European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Portal/PLOTEUS Steering Group meeting (Brussels)
5 - 6 Feb	EQF Advisory Group* (Brussels)
6 Feb	National Strategy for Higher Education Implementation Oversight group meeting (Dublin)
19 – 21 Feb	ENQA Board Meeting* (Sofia, Bulgaria)
20 Feb	EQAVET Working Group first meeting (Brussels)
20 – 21 Feb	European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) maintenance Committee* (Brussels)
25 – 26 Feb	Scientific Advisory Board meeting – Swiss Centre of Accreditation and QA in Higher Education* (Zurich, Switzerland)
28 Feb -1 Mar	European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group* (Vasteras, Sweden)
11 Mar	The Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) Framework Correspondents' meeting (Dublin)
13 – 14 Mar	European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group meeting (Dublin)
14 Mar	Bologna Follow-up Group (Dublin)
21 – 22 Mar	The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in cooperation with the German Accreditation Council (GAC) – conference “Quality Assurance and Quality Development” (Berlin)
17 April	National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) CHARONA project entitled “The changing role of NARICS” * (Cheltenham, England)
24 – 26 April	ENQA Board meeting and Members' Forum* (Prague)

26 April	European Area of Recognition – Higher Educations Institutions (EAR-HEI) project * (The Hague, The Netherlands)
29 April	Northern Ireland EU Co-ordination group meeting for Vocational Education and Training* (Belfast)
5 - 6 May	Europass meeting* (Groningen, The Netherlands)
21 – 22 May	Directors General of Vocational Education and Training (DGVET) meeting (Dublin)
22 - 23 May	Structural Reforms Working Group meeting* (Warsaw, Poland)
29 – 30 May	EQF Advisory Group meeting* (Brussels, Belgium)
5 June	UK European VET Co-ordination Group meeting* (Glasgow)
12 - 14 June	Institute of Republic of Slovenia for VET – workshop on learning outcomes in higher education* (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
16 – 18 June	ENQA Board meeting* (Helsinki, Finland)
17 – 18 June	Annual ENIC-NARIC meeting* (Split, Croatia)
19 June	Face-to-face day for NUIFFIC credential evaluator course* (Split, Croatia)
19 – 20 June	European Skills Competences and Occupations (ESCO) meeting* (Brussels)
21 June	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (Dublin)
21 June	European University Association Institutional Evaluation Programme* (EUA-IEP) Self-Evaluation Group meeting* (Brussels)
3 July	National Strategy for Higher Education – Implementation Oversight Group (Dublin) ⁴
19 July	OAQ Scientific Advisory Board meeting* (Zurich)
23 July	Transitions Reform Steering Group (Dublin)
13 Aug	Signing of a Joint Awarding Agreement between QQI, CIT and Hochschule Darmstadt (Cork)
20 Aug	Meeting with the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN)
11 – 13 Sept	ENQA/EUA Workshop “Promoting Quality Culture in Higher Education Institutions: the role of QA Agencies” (Brussels)
16 – 17 Sept	Transparency of European Higher Education through public quality assurance reports (EQArep) Project Team Meeting* (Berne, Switzerland)
19 Sept	Education and Training Boards of Ireland (ETBI) congress (Naas)
18 – 19 Sept	ENQA Board meeting* (Brussels)



24 – 25 Sept	Bologna Follow-up Group Structural Reforms Working Group* (Brussels)
24 – 28 Sept	European University Association – Institutional Evaluation Programme (EUA-IEP) Extended Steering Committee meeting, Self-Evaluation Group meeting and Annual Seminar* (Bucharest)
26 -27 Sept	European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group meeting* (Brussels) ⁵
8 Oct	Council of Appeals: Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (in Portugal) (A3ES) meeting* (Lisbon)
16 Oct	Association of Chief Executives of State Agencies (ACESA) meeting (Dublin)
18 Oct	Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy Advisory Committee (Dublin)
20 – 23 Oct	Biennial meeting between ENQA and the Council on Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC)* (Boston)
22 – 23 Oct	CEDEFOP and EQAVET seminar – Quality Assurance in VET and higher education for improving their permeability* (Brussels)
24 Oct	Second meeting of the working group on ePortfolio/Skills Passport and interoperability*(Brussels)
24 Oct	The QAA, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) co-hosting a research and policy seminar on the topic of Higher education outcomes - the impact of inputs (London)
28 – 31 Oct	ENQA Board meeting and General Assembly* (Vilnius, Lithuania)
31 Oct	Bologna Steering Committee (Dublin)
6 Nov	Joint meeting of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) National Coordination Points (NCPs), Europass Centres and Euroguidance* (Brussels)
20 Nov	AONTAS General Meeting (Dublin)
21 – 22 Nov	CEDEFOP (European Centre for the development of Vocational Training) conference on the implementation of the learning outcomes approach in Europe (Thessaloniki, Greece)
21 – 23 Nov	8th European Quality Assurance Forum (co-organised by ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE (Gothenburg, Sweden)
26 Nov	Transitions Reform Steering Group (Dublin)
26 – 27 Nov	Annual National Reference Point Meeting* (Brussels)
28 – 29 Nov	Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on increasing synergies between the implementation of the learning outcomes approach and quality assurance arrangements* (Leuven, Belgium)
28 – 29 Nov	ENQA Board Meeting* (Brussels)

2 – 3 Dec	Meeting of the Committee for the self-certification of the Icelandic Qualifications Framework* (Reykjavik, Iceland)
8 -10 Dec	BFUG Structural Reforms Working Group Meeting (Ghent)
10 Dec	High Level Policy Workshop for Policy Makers and Social Partners on Quality and Quality Assurance of VET and HE qualifications (Kiev)
15 – 18 Dec	RPL Network Steering Group meeting and RPL conference [“Exchanging Practices on RPL – Learning from Nordic-Baltic Experiences”] (Tallinn, Estonia)
16 – 17 Dec	EQF Advisory Group Meeting* (Brussels)

Visiting delegations

25 Jan 2013	Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)
13 March	Dutch European Qualifications Framework, National Coordination Point (EQF-NCP)
15 Mar	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework Secretariat
27 March	Bahrain National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance in Education and Training (NAQQAET) re NQF e-Systems in Ireland
16 April	Romanian National Qualifications Authority (ANC) re quality assurance for Recognition for Prior Learning
30 April	QAA meeting with QQI
2 May	Canadian Quality Network for Universities
7 May	Delegation from Germany - Bildungsverbund Haustechnik Sachsen-Anhalt e.V. (BVHT) (Study trip under the auspices of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme)
14 May	The Education and Training Service Centre (ESCT) in Iceland
28 Aug	The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC)
19 Sept	Norwegian group of Social Partners (seven employers and trade union federations) researching the issue of Recognition of Prior Learning
17 Oct	Consultative Committee on Lifelong Learning in Luxembourg comprising representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, professional chambers and directors of institutes providing FE and training to adults
21 Oct	Welsh Government officials from the Qualifications and Regulation Division
29 Oct	Ministry of Labour Bahrain
7 Nov	Korea Research Institute for vocational education and training

11 Nov Professor William Lee, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)

12 Dec Hong Kong Secondary Schools' Principals and Consultants

Invited Presentations

29 Jan 2013 Presentation to the Serbian Ministry of Labour and the Serbian National Employment Service – presentation on QQI with particular reference to meeting the skill needs of industry. (FÁS offices, Baggot St.)

4 Mar Keynote presentation entitled “*The role of Europe-wide and national qualifications frameworks in promoting articulation*” at the 2nd NQF Research Conference: Building articulation and integration, organised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)* (Johannesburg, South Africa)

7 – 9 Mar European University Association (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) Steering Committee Meeting* (Bucharest, Romania)

13 May *The notion of compliance – definitions and examples:* - ENQA Reviewers Training Seminar (Budapest)

14 May *Policy Development in Lifelong Learning* - Leargas Study Visit – NFQ and EQF – (Dublin)

24 May NUI Maynooth discussion forum on teacher qualifications in Vocational Education and Training (Maynooth) ³

29 May *E pluribus unum - The creation of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (the management and consequences of agency mergers)* – ACESA International Conference (TCD) ¹

6 June *Quality Assurance in VET and Higher Education: Creating synergies.* Webinar. (An EQAVET projects initiative.)

6 June *Quality Assurance and the International Education Mark* – Irish Council for Overseas Students AGM (NCI, Dublin)

13 June *Transparency of higher education qualifications – The role of quality assurance agencies.* Workshop on learning outcomes in higher education (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

13 June *RPL- The current situation in Ireland* – RiPLVET (Recognition of Prior Learning for Teachers and Trainers in Vocational Education and Training) Symposium organised by City of Limerick VEC, in partnership with Mary Immaculate College Limerick (Limerick)

13 June *QQI and the Common Awards System with some comments on Maths Standards and Quality* - Conference on numeracy for tutors working in the FE sector organised by NALA and IT Tallaght (IT Tallaght)

9 July *The Irish National Framework of Qualifications and Recognition* – Presentation to Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI)

22 Oct	Presentation - Quality Assurance and Qualifications Frameworks at the biennial meeting between ENQA and the Council on Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) * (Boston)
18 Nov	Presentation to Teagasc Educational Forum – Changing Educational Landscapes and the Implications for Teagasc – a QQI Perspective (Carlow)

*Indicates that costs (part or full) were paid by third parties or recouped by QQI from third parties

Publications

QQI Stakeholder E-zine Edition	April
Consultation Events Evaluation Report	May
Consultation Events Feedback Report	June
Institutional Review of University College Cork	June
Annual Report 2012	June
Interim Arrangements for Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)	July
Where do FETAC (QQI) award holders go?	August
QQI's Key Dates and Information - Awards and Certification 2014 published	September
QQI Stakeholder E-zine Edition	October
QQI Strategy Statement 2014 – 2016	November
Summary Analysis of the Annual Institutional Reports (AIRs)	December
QQI Stakeholder E-zine Edition	December

Green Paper on Reviews

Green Papers

Green Paper on the Comprehensive Implementation of the Functions of Quality and Qualifications Ireland	May
Green Paper on Provider Access to Programme Accreditation	May
Green Paper on Protection of Enrolled Learners	May
Green Paper on Fees for QQI Services	May
Green Paper on Awards and Standards	May
Green Paper on Certification	May
Green Paper on Recognition of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications	May
Green Paper on the International Education Mark	May
Green Paper on Access, Transfer and Progression	May
Green Paper on the Provision of Information for Learners	May
Green Paper on the Recognition of Prior Learning	May
Green Paper on Monitoring and Dialogue	May
Green Paper on Reviews	May

Green Paper on Quality Assurance Guidelines	May
Green Paper on Provider Risk and Proportionality	May
Green Paper on Programme Accreditation	May
Green Paper on the Re-engagement of Legacy Providers with QQI and Future Access to QQI Awards	May

White Papers

Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Programme Validation Leading to QQI Awards	August
Regulations for Protection of Enrolled Learners: Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act	August
Fees for QQI Services	August
Policy and Criteria for the Delegation of Authority to the Institutes of Technology to Make Higher Education and Training Awards (including joint awards)	December
Policy and Criteria for Aligning Professional Awards with the National Framework of Qualifications at Levels 7, 8 and 9	December

Policies Published

Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI Awards	October
Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act and Implementation Dates	October
Fees for QQI Services	October





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