

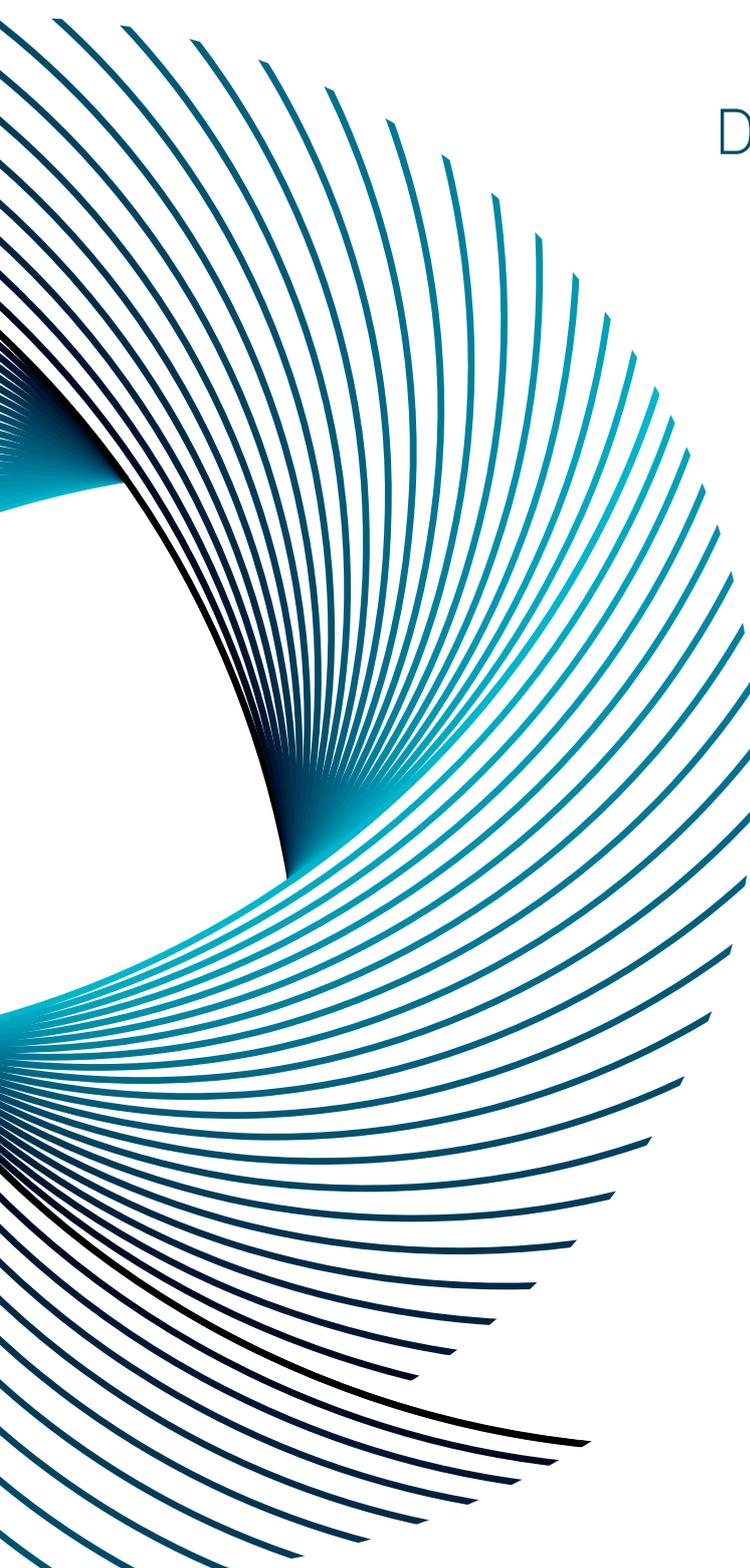


QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE (MIC) REVIEW 2016

Draft Terms of Reference
for Consultation



www.QQI.ie

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE (MIC) REVIEW 2016

Draft Terms of Reference for Consultation

Section	Title	Page
1	Background and Context for the Review	1
1.1	Context and Legislative Underpinning	1
1.2	Purposes	1
2	Objectives and Criteria	3
2.1	Review Objectives	3
2.2	Review Criteria	3
2.3	Augmentation of Criteria	4
3	Review Process	5
3.1	Process and Timeline for the Review	5
3.2	Review Team Profile	6
3.3	Timeline	6
3.4	Role of QQI in Review	7
3.5	Review Costs	8
Appendix 1	Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training [NQAI 2003, restated 2015]	9
1	Introduction	9
2	Credit	11
3	Progression and Transfer Routes	11
4	Entry Arrangements	12
5	Information Provision	12

Section 1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 Context and Legislative Underpinning

In 2016, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) will undertake an institutional review of Mary Immaculate College (MIC) on behalf of the University of Limerick (UL).

Founded in 1898, MIC is a Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts. The College offers a wide range of programmes in education and the liberal arts at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and over 3,000 students are engaged in studies at the institution. MIC is a linked provider of the University of Limerick. This means that, based upon the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement between the two institutions, UL is the academic accrediting body for all higher education programmes at MIC, save where other arrangements are jointly agreed by UL and MIC.

As a linked provider of UL, MIC is subject to review and external quality assurance by UL or, if requested, QQI. MIC is also subject directly to QQI for the review and oversight of Access Transfer and Progression arrangements.

In November 2015, the University of Limerick wrote to QQI and requested that QQI conduct an institution-level external quality assurance review of MIC. Also, in November 2015, UL wrote to MIC to advise that they had made the request to QQI and that the request had been accepted by QQI.

Instruments that underpin the basis for this review include the following:

- the Universities Act 1997
- the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, specifically Section 42
- the Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Limerick and Mary Immaculate College

Review, in this context, refers to the formal review of the effectiveness of the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures established and implemented by MIC. This is a review in accordance with the Terms of Reference set out in this document.

1.2 Purposes

The purposes of this review process are:

1. To provide an external evaluation of institution-wide quality, the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality, and the overall effectiveness of quality assurance at the institution by:

- encompassing the comprehensive, institution-wide procedures for teaching, learning, services and research at MIC;

- emphasising the responsibility for quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution;
- promoting the improvement of quality assurance procedures.

2. To encourage a Quality Assurance (QA) culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience by:

- emphasising the student and the student learning experience in the review;
- providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change within the institution;
- exploring the area of quality enhancement, innovative and effective practices and procedures.

3. To improve public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness by:

- consulting on and publishing terms of reference for the review;
- publishing the reports and outcomes of the review;
- publishing a brief, institutional quality profile at the end of the process;
- assessing the transparent and accessible reporting on quality and quality assurance by the institution.

4. To support systems-level improvement of the quality of higher education by ensuring that:

- there is consistency in the approach to the review to that for similar institutions.

5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice by:

- using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution;
- ensuring that findings are based on evidence;
- facilitating the institution to identify its own metrics and benchmarks for quality relevant to its own mission and context;
- identifying examples of good practice and innovation for further dissemination.

Section 2 Objectives and Criteria

2.1 Review Objectives

Objective 1

To support institutional strategic planning, governance and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement. The main aim of this objective is to consider the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in the context of planning and governance within the institution along with the mission and strategy of the institution.

Objective 2

To support the institution in meeting its responsibility for the operation of internal quality assurance procedures for education, training, research and other services, including but not limited to internal reviews, that are clear and transparent to all its stakeholders, and which provide for the continuing evaluation of all academic, research and service departments and their activities, as outlined in Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015 (ESG 2015). This objective also encompasses the responsibilities of the institution for the quality assurance arrangements and procedures for collaborative provision and partnerships. Examples of these arrangements are the forthcoming incorporation of St. Patrick's College, Thurles and the joint programmes and partnerships with, for instance, the Institute of Technology, Tralee and the University of Göttingen.

As this is an initial quality assurance review, the emphasis will be on evaluating compliance with quality assurance standards and guidelines, particularly ESG. However, where evidence exists of institution-led innovations and initiative in quality enhancement, the review will provide the institution with feedback on these.

Objective 3

To evaluate the extent to which MIC planning, structure and procedures support its responsibilities as a higher education institution with qualifications in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and as an institution that engages with national, European and international guidelines and standards (guidelines listed below), particularly in accordance with the Bologna process.

2.2 Review Criteria

In line with practice in the Irish higher education sector generally, and Ireland's commitment to the Bologna Process, the key criterion is compliance with the standards from Part 1 of the ESG 2015. Though very recent, the 2015 standards build incrementally on the 2009 standards. Accordingly, QQI will provide the review team with a gap analysis between the ESG 2009 and the 2015 revised set. Any standards pertaining solely to ESG 2015 will be used exclusively to guide this institution towards the development of

future quality assurance policies and procedures, rather than as criteria for evaluating compliance.

This criterion should be considered in conjunction with the accompanying guidelines as set out in **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)**. These guidelines provide additional information about good practice and in some cases explain in more detail the meaning and relevance of the standards.

The criterion for MIC as a higher education institution in the NFQ is intended to assist the examination of MIC's role, acting as a linked provider of UL¹, in implementing QQI (NFQ) policies and procedures for access, transfer and progression, including UL-derived procedures. This criterion derives from **Access Transfer and Progression - QQI Policy Restatement 2015**.

2.3 Augmentation of Criteria

The criteria above will be augmented by the Team with guidelines derived from the following:

1. QQI

- Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016

2. Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB):

- Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education (2009);
- National Guidelines of Good Practice for the Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes (2012)

3. Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC):

- Policy for Collaborative programmes, Transnational programmes and Joint Awards (Revised 2012)

4. Irish Higher Education Quality Network:

- Principles of Good Practice in Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement for Higher Education and Training (2005);
- Principles for Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures in Irish Higher Education and Training (2007);
- Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions (2009);
- Draft Guidelines for Transnational and Collaborative Provision; Consultation Document 2012 (v. 8/10/12)

¹ This UL review of the quality assurance arrangements of MIC will also incorporate, where appropriate, UL-derived procedures carried out by MIC. As the UL procedures for NFQ implementation are incorporated, the site visit of the review team will also include interviews with representatives of UL.

5. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA):

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – 3RD Edition (2009)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015)

Section 3 Review Process

3.1 Process and Timeline for the Review

The primary basis for the review process is the bespoke handbook developed for the review.

In line with best national and international practice, the review process will consist of the following elements:

- agreement of terms of reference for the review between the QQI executive and UL, following consultation with MIC and public consultation;
- an institutional self-evaluation review process resulting in an Institutional Self Evaluation Report (referred to as ISER henceforth) to be prepared by MIC addressing the agreed objectives, criteria and terms of reference;
- the appointment of a review team by QQI, in agreement with UL and following the removal of conflict of interest through consultation with MIC, comprising national and international representation to conduct the review process;
- completion of an ISER by MIC;
- a review of the MIC ISER by the review team and consideration by the team of any other information they might consider relevant;
- a planning and site visit to MIC by the review team;
- preparation of a review report by the team for submission to QQI and UL, which will include findings and recommendations in relation to the objectives as set out in this terms of reference;
- preparation of an institutional response by MIC, including a plan with timeframe for implementation of changes, if appropriate;
- consideration of the review report by UL together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation of changes, if appropriate;
- publication and dissemination by MIC, UL and QQI of the review report and MIC response; MIC may choose to publish the ISER;
- a published one-year follow-up report by MIC for consideration by UL;
- if the review team identifies in its review report what it considers to be significant causes of concern, a timeframe for addressing issues will be agreed with MIC.

3.2 Review Team Profile

A review team will be appointed by QQI, using the profile set out below. QQI will be the point of contact between the review team, UL and MIC.

The review team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

- a review Chair – an international reviewer who is a (serving or former) senior third level institution leader - usually a President/Rector or Deputy President/Rector;
- an international reviewer who is a senior third level institution leader from a similar faith-based institution to MIC;
- a coordinating reviewer (acting as a full member of the team) with experience of institutional, national and/or European quality assurance processes;
- a student representative (current or former - less than 2 years) with direct experience of institutional and/or national quality assurance processes within or outside of Ireland;
- a representative of external stakeholders (national and international) which could be an employer, an employer representative or someone from the broader community of interest to MIC;
- one Irish reviewer (with recent or former experience – within the last five years) at a senior level with quality assurance processes at an Irish third level institution;

3.3 Timeline

Timeline	Action or Milestone in the process	Actor/s
9-10 months before team visit	Agreed timeframe for Institutional Review process	QQI, UL, MIC
9-10 months before team visit	Publication of Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for consultation Draft TOR to UL Academic Council for noting Draft TOR to MIC for consultation TOR published on QQI website for public consultation	QQI, UL, MIC
Approx. 6-9 months before team visit	Terms of Reference established and published by QQI and UL, following consultation TOR to QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee for noting	QQI, UL
Approx. 6-9 months before team visit	Publication of the Review Handbook	QQI
Approx. 6-9 months before team visit	Confirmation of appointment of review team members by QQI, in agreement with UL, following assurance of removal of conflict of interest with MIC	QQI, UL and MIC
3 to 6 months before team visit	Completion of the ISER	MIC
August 2016	Submission of the ISER and other supporting documentation to QQI for distribution, to the review team, and to UL for noting	MIC
Approx. 8 weeks before site visit	Training of review team members for institutional review	QQI, UL
Approx. 7 weeks before site visit	Feedback by review team members on initial impressions of the ISER	Review Team, QQI

Timeline	Action or Milestone in the process	Actor/s
Approx. 7 weeks before site visit	Pre-visit planning visit between review team representatives, QQI and MIC	Review Team/QQI/MIC
End November 2016	Site visit to MIC by review team (4-5 days approximately) Preliminary (oral) feedback on findings by the review team	Review Team/QQI/MIC
January 2017	Draft report on findings of the review team sent by QQI to MIC for factual accuracy	QQI
3 Weeks following receipt of draft report	MIC response to QQI with any factual corrections required	MIC
2-4 Weeks following receipt of factual accuracy response	Final report on findings of review team sent by QQI to MIC and UL	QQI
6-8 weeks following receipt of report	Response by MIC to QQI including plan with timeframe for implementation of changes, if appropriate	MIC
Next available UL Academic Council meeting	Consideration of report and MIC response by UL Academic Council Publication of report and response on website once adopted	QQI, UL, MIC
12 months after adoption	Follow up report by MIC to UL Publication of the follow-up report and UL response on website once adopted	MIC, UL

3.4 Role of QQI in Review

In accordance with the functions set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012, sections 35 and 84, QQI will:

1. Publish draft TOR for the review of MIC for consultation
2. Agree and publish final TOR for the review of MIC
3. Contact, confirm and appoint review team members
4. Facilitate the review process with UL and MIC
5. Provide UL and MIC with advice on process and criteria
6. Support the review activities of the review team and advise the team on criteria and policy
7. Act as a point of contact between the review team, MIC and UL
8. Organise visits in cooperation with the review team and MIC
9. Provide training to the review team
10. Edit reports for approval and publication
11. Advise UL on the findings set out in the review report and the response of the institution
12. Publish the review report and the response of the institution

3.5 Review Costs

In keeping with standard practice, the costs of the review will be paid by the institution (MIC). UL and MIC will discuss arrangements for the disbursement of costs. As an agent acting on behalf of UL, QQI will bill UL directly for expenses incurred (including fees paid to reviewers). QQI overheads for the review will be covered by the current UL relationship fee.

Appendix 1 Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training [NQAI 2003, restated 2015]

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to restate for the benefit of providers, those procedures for access, transfer and progression (ATP) of learners that they are, for the time being, required to establish or to continue to operate in order to comply with the requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012) (the 2012 Act).

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) established “*Policies, actions and procedures for the promotion of access, transfer and progression*” (March 2003). This was done in tandem with NQAI’s establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The document included statutory determinations under section 8(2)(d) of the Qualifications Act (1999) of procedures to be implemented by providers of further and higher education and training. Section 84(15) of the 2012 Act states that: until such time as QQI establishes its own policies and criteria for ATP, a provider to whom section 56 of that Act applies (that is relevant providers and linked providers) shall establish procedures for access, transfer and progression of learners in accordance with the procedures established by NQAI.

QQI has no immediate plans to adopt new policies and criteria under Section 56 of the 2012 Act². Public consultation on ATP in 2013 confirmed that QQI’s policy on ATP was seen as important but did not disclose any compelling case for urgent change to the 2003 determinations. QQI is engaging in ongoing consultation on the most appropriate way to develop new policies and criteria. This acknowledges also the review of the NFQ scheduled for 2016, which also provides for review of the associated ATP policy and procedures.

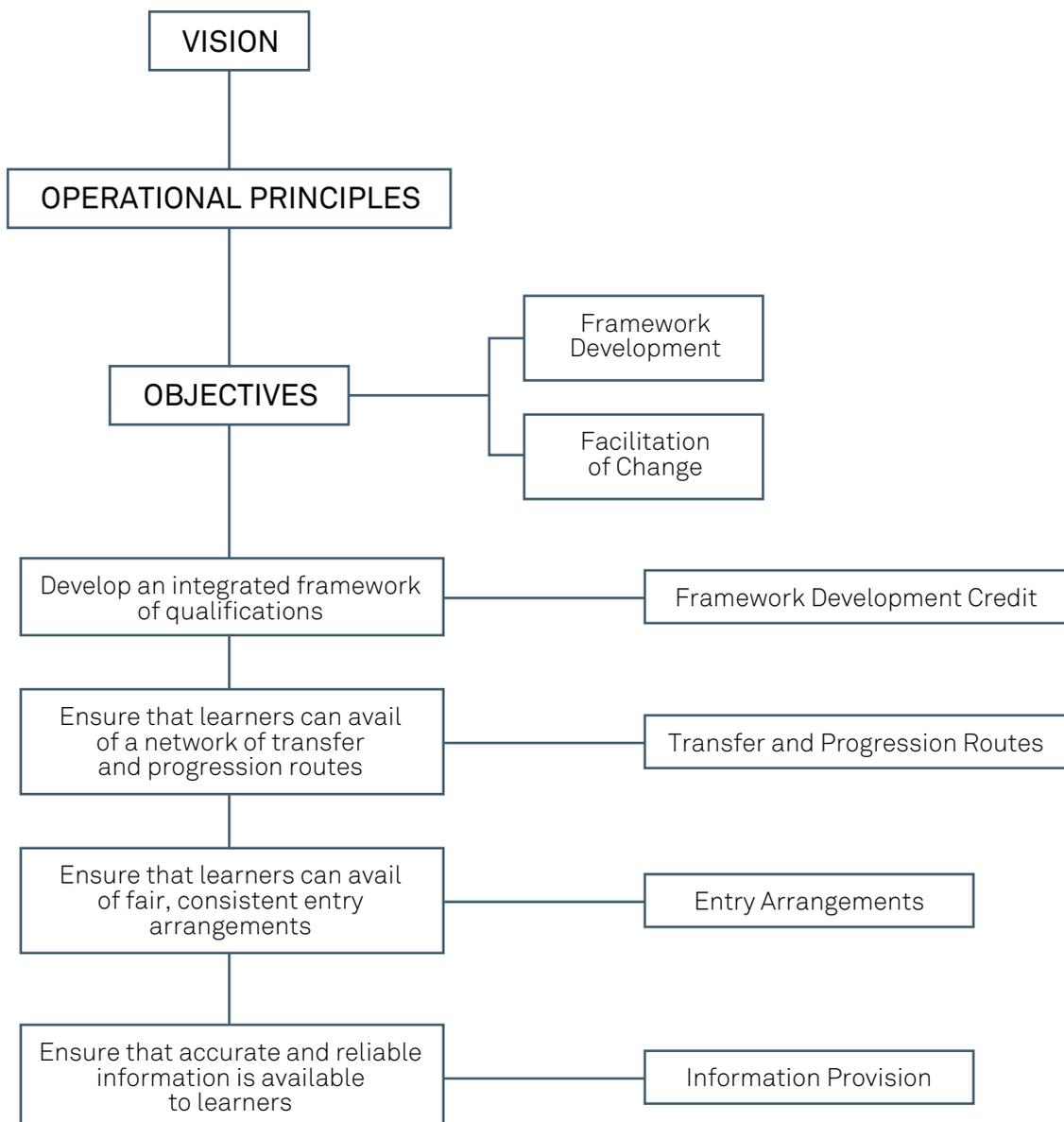
NQAI presented its policy alongside a vision, operational principles and objectives for access, transfer and progression with a variety of actions and procedures recommended to itself, the former awards councils and to providers. The broad vision, principles and objectives remain valid and relevant to all actors in the system. The specific recommendations to national bodies are in some cases rendered moot by subsequent policy developments by NQAI or the award councils or are rendered less relevant by the amalgamation of these bodies into QQI. QQI continues to adhere to the broad policy approach and the recommendations in its operation as a quality assurance and awarding body.

² As discussed in the *Green Paper 4.5* (May 2013), available at www.QQI.ie

Relevant and linked providers are required to develop procedures for access, transfer and progression for a variety of specific purposes under the 2012 Act. To make their specific obligations clearer this document extracts and republishes those sections of the 2003 document that relate specifically to providers. These provisions had previously been featured in Addendum 3 of the 2003 document. A number of editorial changes have been made to update obsolete references to the former bodies.

The basic structure of the policy (see *figure 1* below) grouped the procedures into four: credit, transfer and progression routes, entry arrangements, and information provision.

Figure 1: Structure of QQI's ATP Policy



2 CREDIT

The Authority considers that it is appropriate to determine interim procedures for providers prior to the implementation of a national approach to credit. These procedures relate to the specification of arrangements for the recognition of prior learning by providers of education and training programmes leading to awards. These are as follows:

- All providers are required to develop a statement of arrangements available in respect of each of their programmes for the recognition of prior learning, for entry, for credit towards an award and for access to a full award. These statements should define the purposes for which recognition of prior learning processes can be used, i.e. to enable entry to the programme; to provide exemption from programme requirements or credit towards an award; or to establish eligibility for a full award. Where the recognition of prior learning is used to enable entry to a programme, the statement of arrangements available should indicate to learners the competences needed to succeed on the programme.
- In relation to providers whose programmes are validated by the QQI or who have been delegated authority by QQI to make awards, this statement of arrangements must be consistent with the policies and procedures for QQI Awards.

Note: NQAI adopted “*Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training*” in 2004³. The principles and guidelines are intended to guide institutions and awarding bodies in developing their credit systems to complement the NFQ. They remain in effect and supplement these procedures.

The former Further Education and Training Awards Council developed a credit system for its awards. This system has been incorporated into and superseded by QQI’s “Policy for Determining Awards Standards” (QP.12, 2014). In determining procedures for credit towards an award, further education and training providers are constrained by the credit assigned to the target award (major, minor, special purpose and/or supplemental). Providers of QQI FET awards do not assign award credits.

3 PROGRESSION AND TRANSFER ROUTES

The Authority has determined procedures to be implemented by providers to facilitate the extension of transfer and progression routes at all levels of the system, and to clarify for learners the arrangements for use of transfer and progression routes:

- Providers, in co-operation with the relevant awarding bodies, should identify transfer and progression routes into and onwards from all programmes leading to awards in the framework.
- In relation to transfer and progression routes identified, providers should also specify any particular attainments, in the awards to which their programmes lead, that are required for transfer or progression (e.g. where the achievement of a

³ Available at www.QQI.ie

Distinction in an award is required to facilitate access to a programme leading to an award at the next level).

- Providers should make the necessary adaptations to programmes to facilitate participants in making successful transitions; this procedure refers to the participation needs of all learners, but particularly those who are accessing programmes by non-standard routes, and includes transfer or progression into and out of programmes.

4 ENTRY ARRANGEMENTS

Entry is understood as being entry on initial access or by transfer or progression.

Providers will be required to ensure that:

- Entry arrangements are clear, decisions on allocation of places on programmes are transparent, and all applicants are treated in a fair, equal and consistent manner
- Appropriate arrangements are made for an appeals process
- For every programme, prospective learners have available statements of the knowledge, skill and competence needed as a basis for successful participation, and there is comparability in the factors defined for similar programmes
- For each programme, there is clear definition of the awards in the framework that are recognised as demonstrating eligibility for entry and, where relevant, the attainments required in these awards.

5 INFORMATION PROVISION

To ensure the maximum effect of the framework in promoting transparency and clarity for learners, the Authority has determined procedures to be followed by providers to ensure that learners and prospective learners are able to get comprehensive information on the possibilities for access, transfer and progression in a clear, straightforward and consistent manner. These procedures are formulated as information protocols to be observed by all relevant providers as defined in the legislation:

- All providers are to inform learners commencing programmes of the name of the awarding body and the title, award-type and framework level designation of the award associated with that programme.
- All providers, for each and every programme, will publish in a standard and accessible format:
 - The arrangements for eligibility to enter, including a statement of the knowledge, skill and competence needed by the learner as a basis for successful participation on the programme.
 - Arrangements to assess learner's eligibility to enter.
 - Further selection arrangements, where these apply.
 - A statement of arrangements available for recognition of prior learning, for entry to each of their programmes, and for access to an award.
 - Possibilities for transfer and/or progression associated with the programme, including any relevant specific progression linkages.

- Details of learning support available for specific learner groups such as learners with disabilities, or learners whose mother tongue is not English.
- All information and publicity documentation referring to a programme leading to an award will include a statement of the arrangements for entry, and a description of the transfer / progression possibilities into and out of the programme.
- Any supplementary document (i.e. certificate or diploma supplement to promote transparency of an award) issued by providers with independent awarding powers will include information about:
 - The placing of the award in the national framework of qualifications – the name of the awarding body and the title, award-type and framework level designation of the award.
 - The transfer and progression opportunities associated with the award.

