

Memorandum of understanding

between

**the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Gloucester, United Kingdom**

and

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dublin, Ireland**

Partner organisations

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1UB, UK

Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland

Roles and responsibilities

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997 and is responsible for safeguarding the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and for informing and encouraging continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education in the UK. QAA is also responsible for the recognition of Access to HE courses. QAA is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

2 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in November 2012 following the amalgamation of four predecessor bodies; the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the Irish Universities Quality Board and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. QQI's key roles are to provide external quality assurance of institutions and providers in both higher and further education and training; to be the custodian of the National Framework of Qualifications; and to make and certify awards. In addition, QQI is responsible for developing an International Education Mark for education and training programmes delivered to international students and establishing a database of programme and qualifications.

Statement of intent

3 Having similar responsibilities with regard to the quality assurance of higher education providers within their respective jurisdictions, QAA and QQI wish to establish closer relations for the purposes of dialogue, cooperation and collaboration through a memorandum of understanding. QAA and QQI acknowledge a common commitment to the advancement of quality assurance in higher education.

4 Notwithstanding the issues outlined in this memorandum of understanding, it is of note that the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education and the provision of information to the public in both jurisdictions rests with the higher education providers themselves.

5 This memorandum of understanding sets out the understanding of the principles that will underlie relations between them and the areas of collaboration and key themes of mutual interest. This memorandum may be supported by further and more detailed operational agreements, particularly in relation to the sharing of information.

6 QAA and QQI will seek to build on the good working relationship that already exists by clearly setting out their interaction through this memorandum, information sharing agreements and regular liaison meetings.

Areas of cooperation and collaboration

7 Whilst respecting the distinctive roles and responsibilities of both parties, and their separate roles, there are a number of areas of shared interest and interface in the context of higher education provision in the UK and Ireland, and in transnational collaborative provision. Collaborative working will be to the benefit of both parties in supporting their sectors where they deliver education in conjunction with other organisations through avoiding duplication and enabling more effective and efficient delivery on their remits. Both parties are committed to developing a deeper understanding of each others' respective roles and responsibilities, and to the sharing of practice and experiences.

8 Areas of cooperation and collaboration are likely to include:

- the sharing of information regarding degree-awarding bodies from one country working with private and other providers in the partner's country
- establishing a formal mechanism whereby the good standing of a university/provider with their home agency can be efficiently ascertained by the partner agency
- sharing relevant information on the operation of the qualifications frameworks for which the agencies are responsible
- cooperating in the identification of fraudulent awarding bodies or accrediting agencies which may adversely affect the reputation of higher education awards and institutions in both countries
- periodic sharing of practice and experiences of mutual interest
- facilitating staff development through engaging staff from one agency in the national and international quality review work undertaken by the partner agency and other relevant projects as appropriate
- promoting the implementation of the European Higher Education Area along lines that are compatible with the best elements of the common vision and shared tradition of higher education on these islands
- promoting understanding of the quality and reputation of Irish and UK higher education internationally and assuring the standards of transnational education (TNE) provision.

9 Both parties are committed to the principle of good communication with each other on areas of mutual interest. This will be done through regular liaison and regular discussion on relevant issues.

10 Subject to the legislation on data protection and freedom of information in the respective countries, and other constraints (for example, commercial confidentiality, price sensitive matters) exchanges between QAA and QQI may, at times, be in confidence.

Exchange of information

11 Each party will also endeavour to provide information in its possession that may be reasonably required by the other in the safeguarding of academic standards and quality. This will be subject to necessary confidentiality constraints and safeguards, and statutory bars on disclosure. To increase transparency, QAA and QQI will agree to publish and operate to a written agreement for the sharing of routine information. Any non-routine sharing will be in line with this memorandum.

Implementing the memorandum

12 This document sets out the principles governing the implementation of the memorandum. The Chief Executive of QAA and the Chief Executive of QQI will have responsibility for managing the implementation of the terms of the memorandum. This responsibility may be delegated to relevant members of the body's staff in relation to particular areas of cooperation.

13 Unless projects or other activities are specially agreed to meet particular project resources requirements, the two partners will normally cover their own costs of implementing the terms of the memorandum.

14 Any projects or other activities that are entered into under the terms of this memorandum will be described in administrative schedules to be annexed to the memorandum.

Review and duration of memorandum

15 The memorandum will take effect from the date of its signature and shall continue for five years unless it is terminated by the giving of three months' notice by either party. It may be extended on mutual agreement by both parties.

16 This memorandum may be amended at any time by agreement of both parties. In addition, this memorandum will be reviewed and updated as necessary in the light of experience of its operation in practice and of any changes to qualifications systems, or the roles and responsibilities of either organisation. Notwithstanding the above, there will be a scheduled review of the memorandum at the end of its fourth year, if a review has not been carried out in the intervening period.

Caveats

17 This memorandum does not permit the use of copyright materials (including logos) or the dissemination of confidential information to a third party without permission of the partner.

18 This memorandum does not bind the partner organisations or their staff/officers to any financial or other liability without further formal documentation.

19 This memorandum is not legally binding. It will serve as a working document that will be subject to review in the light of operational practice.

Publication of this memorandum

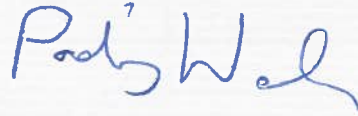
20. Both QAA and QQI will publish a copy of this memorandum on their respective websites: www.qaa.ac.uk and www.qqi.ie.

Signed at the 4th ENQA General Assembly, in Vilnius, Lithuania, by:



for QAA
Anthony McClaran
Chief Executive

Date: 29 October 2013



for QQI
Padraig Walsh
Chief Executive

Date: 29 October 2013