



Quality and Qualifications Ireland Strategy Statement 2014 - 2016

www.QQI.ie



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Introduction



This is the first strategy statement for Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). It provides direction and guidance for our staff and our stakeholders on our mission, vision, values and goals and how we intend to achieve them. The statement will cover a three year period from January 2014 to December 2016. It will inform successive annual corporate plans which will set out the objectives, actions and outputs to be achieved each year by the organisation. Over the course of the next three years we will monitor and review the implementation of our strategy and publish reports on our performance.

Qualifications play an ever more important role in modern day life. They are statements of the learning achieved by individuals and are increasingly necessary to access employment and further educational opportunities. The recognition of qualifications is an essential element of job and educational mobility in an increasingly globalised world. The acceptance and recognition of qualifications is strengthened by external quality assurance processes which ensure that qualifications are at the appropriate level and that they continue to enjoy currency and relevance. Qualifications, their quality assurance and the external quality assurance of providers of further and higher education and training are at the heart of the work of QQI.

QQI is a state agency under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills. It was established in November 2012 following the amalgamation of four bodies: the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Quality Board. QQI has assumed all the functions of those bodies and has new functions to develop. QQI will develop an International Education Mark for providers of education and training programmes to international students and will establish a database of programmes and qualifications. Through this work we will bring coherence between qualifications and quality assurance in further and higher education and training, build on the successes of the legacy bodies and promote public confidence and trust.

QQI has a broad remit across education and training in Ireland and plays a key role in the qualifications system through our custodianship of the National Framework of Qualifications. Our work concerns learners in diverse settings – schools, adult education, community education, English language schools, vocational training and higher education. We also work with providers of further and higher education and training; 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.

This strategy statement was developed by our staff and Board. We took account of our legal mandate; the achievements and inherited commitments of the legacy bodies and what we learned from them; our major areas of work and plans; our external and internal environment and related challenges and consultation with external stakeholders. Our external stakeholders encourage us to deliver quality outcomes for all stakeholders, especially learners, to collaborate with them to assure and enhance quality, to regulate effectively, to develop further the National Framework of Qualifications and to promote a responsive, dynamic qualifications system.

Over the next three years, QQI will seek to maintain and improve the quality of Ireland's further and higher education and training. We will support the delivery of internationally respected qualifications and more pathways and flexibility for learners. We will ensure the public is informed about the quality of Ireland's education and training programmes and successfully integrate our four legacy bodies to bring greater coherence to quality assurance and qualifications.

Dr Pdraig Walsh
Chief Executive
November 2013

Our Mission

QQI promotes the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training, and quality assures providers.

QQI supports and promotes a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders.

Our Vision

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

Our 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.

Our Role

We have a number of key roles. These derive from the statutory functions assigned to us under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Our Key Roles

- Quality assure providers of further and higher education and training and their research and related services
- Promote, develop and maintain 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 in relation to national policy on quality assurance and enhancement in education and training.

Our Stakeholders

We serve stakeholders in all sectors of education and training: learners, providers, Government departments, State agencies and funding bodies; regulatory bodies; professional bodies; qualifications awarding bodies; sectoral and representative bodies, and international bodies responsible for quality assurance and qualifications.

Our Goals

1

To establish a comprehensive, coherent set of QQI policies and procedures with the National Framework of Qualifications as a central organising feature

Strategic approaches

- a. Adopt and implement a comprehensive policy development programme
- b. Configure our relations with providers on the basis of a lifecycle of engagement with our work
- c. Prioritise the development of QQI policies to open access to programme validation to new providers and re-engage with providers that had relationships with the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Quality Board
- d. Maintain, develop and review the National Framework of Qualifications
- e. Use the National Framework of Qualifications to recognise quality assured qualifications of recognised awarding bodies
- f. Engage with professional bodies and regulatory bodies to promote the use of the National Framework of Qualifications
- g. Support the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework in Ireland
- h. Communicate our international work to stakeholders.

2

To prioritise learners in our policies and actions and in our relations with stakeholders

Strategic approaches

- a. Place the learner at the centre of our work
- b. Engage learner representatives in our policies, actions, governance structures, quality assurance and qualifications processes
- c. Encourage providers to engage learners fully in their quality assurance and qualifications processes, including complaints and appeals mechanisms
- d. Provide advice on qualifications recognition
- e. Make awards and certify learning.

3

To quality assure providers and support the enhancement of the quality of education and training provision

Strategic approaches

- a. Base our relations with providers on their respective legal autonomy, capacity and the education and training that they provide
- b. Quality assure providers of further and higher education and training who meet robust quality standards
- c. Explore and develop diverse models of external quality assurance
- d. Clearly articulate our standards, criteria and guidelines for different providers in relation to quality assurance and programme validation
- e. Encourage capacity-building amongst providers through identifying, sharing and disseminating good practice in quality
- f. Address the internationalisation of education by developing quality standards and guidelines, including the International Education Mark
- g. Develop effective quality mechanisms to underpin new forms of further and higher education and training provision, delivery, assessment and certification
- h. Monitor and review the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance arrangements
- i. Review and assess the impact of our review, monitoring, regulatory and communication activities to learn, adapt and improve what we do
- j. Contribute to work to develop European and international standards and guidelines for quality assurance; use such standards and guidelines to inform our work and communicate this to stakeholders.

4

To collaborate with stakeholders to create greater coherence within Ireland's education and training systems and with its qualifications system

Strategic approaches

- a. Develop effective mechanisms for consultation, communication and collaboration with existing and new stakeholders
- b. Work to connect the on-going reforms in higher education and in further education and training to generate more pathways, progression, innovation and flexibility in provision and in qualifications for learners
- c. In the context of the reform of further education and training and the implementation of the higher education strategy, develop quality assurance mechanisms to maintain and improve quality
- d. Encourage the development of effective structures to determine standards for qualifications and to meet employment needs
- e. Encourage and facilitate innovation and responsiveness in qualifications and in programmes to meet employment, societal and cultural needs
- f. Maintain and extend relationships with international peer agencies and networks
- g. Represent Ireland, on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, in international networks for the recognition of qualifications.

5

To provide relevant, timely and comprehensive information to the public on the quality of education and training provision and qualifications

Strategic approaches

- a. Ensure that providers of further and higher education and training make available relevant, accessible, accurate and timely information on the quality of provision and qualifications to learners and to the public
- b. Establish a comprehensive, accessible national database of quality assured programmes and qualifications
- c. Publish accessible information on the outcomes of our quality assurance and regulatory activities and support system-wide interventions to maintain and improve quality
- d. Communicate to the public our roles, responsibilities and activities and those of key stakeholders in relation to quality assurance and qualifications
- e. Co-ordinate our approaches with State bodies to collecting, sharing and presenting information on quality, programmes and qualifications in order to increase transparency, generate efficiencies and avoid duplication.

6

To build an organisational culture to enable QQI to perform successfully

Strategic approaches

- a. Strengthen the skills and capacities of our staff to innovate and manage change
- b. Adhere to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State bodies
- c. Regularly evaluate our activities, priorities and use of resources
- d. Review, integrate and improve our business processes and Information and Communications Technology systems
- e. Establish and operate committee structures which support peer review and on-going, effective engagement with external stakeholders
- f. Implement a robust internal quality assurance system
- g. Develop a culture of planning and project management
- h. Enhance our performance through an effective performance management development system for staff
- i. Regularly monitor, report and review the implementation of our strategy and our performance
- j. Ensure that we comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Outcomes of our work

Through our work in the next three years

1. The quality of Ireland's further and higher education and training is maintained and improved and is of high international standing
2. Ireland's qualifications system delivers relevant, timely and internationally respected qualifications
3. There are more pathways and greater flexibility and mobility for learners across the different sectors of education and training
4. The public is informed about the quality of further and higher education and training and qualifications
5. QQI has built an organisational culture which successfully amalgamates the four legacy bodies, delivers efficiencies and brings greater coherence to quality assurance and qualifications.

Statutory functions of Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Approve the quality assurance procedures of providers of further and higher education and training, other than universities

Review and monitor the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of providers of further and higher education, including universities

Promote, maintain and further develop the National Framework of Qualifications

Advise the Minister in relation to national policy on quality assurance and enhancement in education and training

Establish a code of practice for the provision of education and training programmes to international learners and authorise the use of an International Education Mark by providers who comply with the code

Establish, maintain and develop a database of awards and of programmes leading to such awards

Establish and maintain a register of providers who are authorised to use the International Education Mark and who have arrangements in place to protect enrolled learners

Approve access, transfer and progression procedures for providers of further and higher education and training, other than universities

Review the implementation by providers of further and higher education and training, including universities, of their procedures for access, transfer and progression

Validate programmes of education and training and review and monitor validated programmes

Establish the standards of knowledge, skill and competence to be achieved by learners before an award can be made by QQI

Make awards and certify learning

Delegate authority to make awards to providers and review the operation of such authority

Ensure that providers who have a legal obligation to have arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners in place have such arrangements in place

Cooperate with international bodies on qualifications and quality assurance, in particular to facilitate the recognition in Ireland of awards of those bodies and the international recognition of awards made in Ireland

Inform ourselves of the education, training, skills and qualifications requirements of industry, agriculture, business, tourism, trade, the professions and the public service, including requirements as to the level of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners

Inform ourselves of practices outside the State that are relevant to our functions and have regard to Government policies related to education and training

Consult with providers, professional recognition bodies, staff and learner representatives, the Higher Education Authority, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the State Examinations Commission and any other persons or bodies QQI considers appropriate.