



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilochta agus Cáilochtaí Éireann



**QAA**

## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

between

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

and

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Ireland**

This Memorandum of Understanding is made between

**the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education,**

Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1UB,  
United Kingdom (UK),  
hereafter referred to as **QAA**

and

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland,**

26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2, D07 P266, Ireland  
hereafter referred to as **QQI**

QAA and QQI are referred to collectively as 'both Parties'.

### **Whereas**

QAA was established in 1997. Its purpose is to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality and global reputation of UK higher education. It does this by working with higher education providers, regulatory bodies and students, with the shared objective of supporting students to achieve positive educational outcomes. As a membership organisation, QAA represents and supports its university and college members, working in partnership with them to enhance the quality of their provision.

QAA works to secure academic standards in UK higher education wherever it is delivered across the globe and takes a leading role in international developments in standards and quality, maintaining close relationships with many international quality assurance agencies, governments and higher education institutions.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a statutory body in 2012 and is responsible for the external quality assurance of institutions and providers in both higher and further education and training in Ireland operating within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It is also the custodian of the NFQ and maintains a statutory database of programmes, qualifications and providers referred to as the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ). QQI as a national awarding body, makes and certifies awards. It is also responsible for developing an International Education Mark (IEM) for Education and training programmes

delivered to international students. Since 2019, QQI is the national body responsible for the prosecution of those who facilitate learner cheating.

## **QAA and QQI**

Having comparable missions and institutional objectives especially in the quality assurance of cross-border providers of higher education, and a common interest in the development and promotion of good practices and the interest of national and international students, both parties wish to continue and deepen further their cooperation upon the terms contained herein.

### **Key principles: QAA and QQI**

Both Parties understand and mutually acknowledge their respective independent regulatory responsibilities as authorised by the separate national governments and/or as membership organisations recognised by national governments.

Both Parties are members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), with comparable missions and organisational objectives in the assurance of quality in higher education, and now wish to establish a closer professional relationship as equal partners within a collaborative framework.

Both Parties envision benefits to be achieved through dialogue and cooperation, with benefits accruing to both agencies and to the institutions under their purview.

Both Parties understand the critical necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of information related to institutions, as well as to the agencies themselves as developed through external quality assurance and quality enhancement activities.

Therefore, both Parties agree to the following framework for mutually supportive and collaborative engagement.

This Memorandum of Understanding is not exhaustive and is not intended to be legally binding between QAA and QQI, except where specifically stated.

## **Areas of cooperation and collaboration**

To these ends, QAA and QQI, in accordance with the framework of British and Irish laws and regulations, will pursue the following objectives for their mutual benefit and with a commitment to reduce unnecessary regulatory duplication of effort on providers operating across borders:

### **(a) Mutual understanding**

Work to enhance their understanding of each other's approach to assuring quality in higher education, the respective systems in place for quality assurance and enhancement in higher education, and the critical matters relating to quality and standards in higher education in both countries.

### **(b) Information exchange**

Exchange information and offer professional advice about each other's activities and processes, about developments in their respective country's higher education systems, and about cross-border providers operating in both jurisdictions, having regard for the

confidentiality of the information and relevant Data Protection legislation (in accordance with the supporting information sharing agreement).

**(c) Staff development**

Where appropriate and possible, support the development of staff from the two agencies through activities such as staff exchange, observing each other's review processes, and provision of training.

**(d) Use of each other's reviewers**

Where appropriate and possible, taking into account of operational constraints, draw on each other's expertise to strengthen the international dimension of institutional reviews and/or accreditations, including reviews of cross-border education.

**(e) Recognition**

Where appropriate and possible, in operations relating to quality assurance of higher education within one Party's jurisdiction but originating from the other Party's jurisdiction, have due regard to the relevant decisions and judgements of the other Party subject to mutually agreed quality assurance procedures and policies by both Parties.

**(f) Collaboration**

Where appropriate and possible, collaborate in relation to mutually agreed projects and activities for the benefit of both parties, including: the quality enhancement of transnational education (TNE); the identification of fraudulent institutions, awarding bodies or accrediting agencies in the UK and in Ireland; supporting student mobility; and undertaking research on quality assurance related issues.

More specifically, at the end of this agreement, QAA and QQI aim to have achieved concrete collaboration in the following activities:

- Sharing information and quality assurance outcomes, including recommendations, about UK higher education providers operating in Ireland and eventual Irish higher education providers operating in the UK, within the context and remit of QAA and QQI within their respective jurisdictions.
- The identification of, and approaches to dealing with, academic fraud and cheating including contract cheating in both jurisdictions.
- Updating and communicating changes to the regulatory framework and context in both jurisdictions to the respective higher education sectors, such as through webinars, seminars or publications.
- Identifying opportunities for engagements with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
- Sharing planned significant communications/media engagement with the other Party in advance, with particular reference to areas of known mutual interest.

If any additional costs will be incurred as a result of the collaboration, agreement to progress any allocation/reimbursement of costs should be agreed between QAA and QQI before any work is undertaken.

**Confidentiality**

Both Parties agree to ensure that any information of a confidential nature ('confidential information') that is shared between Parties is safeguarded and remains confidential.

Both Parties agree not to disclose confidential information received from the other without the written consent of the disclosing Party. Both Parties acknowledge that, in appropriate cases, they may reach a separate written agreement about the handling of particular

confidential information or classes of confidential information. Both Parties agree that this paragraph is legally binding.

### **Freedom of Information Acts**

The information shared will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the other Party except as may be required under law, including the Freedom of Information Act 2014. QQI, as an Irish public sector body, is subject to said legislation.

### **Retention of information**

Information exchanged under this Memorandum of Understanding will be held and disposed of in accordance with QAA's and QQI's retention schedules. For both QAA and QQI, this will be up to five years.

### **Intellectual property rights**

Any reports, notes, records, correspondence, documents, computer and other storage, such as disks or other documents and materials used in this Memorandum of Understanding, which has been generated or is already owned by either organisation, shall be, and shall remain, the property of that organisation.

### **The settlement**

In the event of a dispute between both Parties, it shall be resolved by friendly consultations.

### **Duration of Memorandum**

The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect from the date of its signature and shall continue for **three years** unless it is terminated by the giving of three months' notice by either Party. It may be extended on mutual agreement of both Parties. Upon termination, both Parties agree that the termination shall not affect the validity and duration of any arrangements, activities or projects unless mutually agreed, in writing, between both Parties.

### **Alteration of Memorandum**

This Memorandum is signed by the parties in a spirit of amicable cooperation. The terms of the Memorandum may be altered with the written approval of both parties.

### **Management and liaison arrangements for the Memorandum**

The Chief Executive of QAA (at the time of signing, **Ms Vicki Stott**) and the Chief Executive Officer of QQI (at the time of signing, **Dr Padraig Walsh**) will have responsibility for managing the implementation of the terms of the Memorandum and taking stock of the terms of the Memorandum on an annual basis. This responsibility may be delegated to relevant members of the agencies' staff in relation to particular areas of cooperation. The Parties will aim to meet at least two times each year, with at least one meeting in person (where possible); the meeting chair will alternate between the parties.

### **Resources**

Unless alternative arrangements are specifically agreed to meet particular project requirements, each Party will normally cover their own costs of implementing the terms of this Memorandum. For particular areas of cooperation, donor funding may be sought from other sources.

Signed in the UK and Ireland on **14 December 2021**.

**Signatures of the Parties:**



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**Vicki Stott**  
Chief Executive Officer

**The Quality Assurance Agency for  
Higher Education (QAA)**

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