



## PATHWAY TO THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION MARK FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SECTOR

This document provides information in response to questions raised by English language education providers. Further information will be added as it is available.

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE IEM

#### WHO WILL AWARD THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION MARK TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS?

QQI will have sole responsibility for administering the IEM authorisation scheme. Review panels will assess compliance with due diligence and a planned code of practice and make a recommendation to QQI. Recommendations will be considered through QQI internal governance process.

#### MANY PROVIDERS STRADDLE BOTH TOURISM AND EDUCATION. WHERE WILL THEY FIT IN AN EDUCATION QA FRAMEWORK?

While providers of summer programmes do offer some tourism activities as well as education activities, regulation of the English Language education sector will be the responsibility of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

#### WILL PROVIDERS BE REQUIRED TO RE-APPLY ANNUALLY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION MARK?

Providers complete an online application, which is updated as changes occur, eg a change in academic manager or a new programme. Site visits will take place every three years following the initial application.

### CONSULTATION

#### WILL PROVIDERS HAVE A SAY IN THE CREATION OF THE CRITERIA UNDERPINNING AND CONTAINED IN THE IEM?

QQI will consult with representative stakeholders from the sector regarding quality assurance and the Code of Practice for ELE. These meetings will begin in May 2022. This targeted consultation will be followed by a full public consultation in Q3 2022. All ELE providers will have the opportunity to contribute to this public consultation.

#### WILL CODES OF PRACTICE BE AGREED AND FINALISED BEFORE THE PROGRAMME IS IMPLEMENTED?



QQI will hold meetings with different representatives from different provider types, eg large, small, year-round, summer etc. During these meetings, feedback will be gathered on the codes, which will be updated as agreed.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### WHY IS THE IEM APPLICATION PROCESS OPEN IN PHASES?

There are two phases: application for due diligence assessment and application for authorisation to use the IEM which will involve an assessment of compliance with the code of practice.

### WILL TRAINING BE PROVIDED FOR ELE PROVIDERS TO HELP THEM MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE IEM?

QQI will provide a series of information briefings for ELE providers which will address all aspects of the IEM process and requirements. Further details of these sessions will be provided in due course.

### WHAT MEASURES WILL QQI PUT IN PLACE FOR ELE PROVIDERS TO GIVE TRANSPARENCY TOWARDS ACHIEVING AND RETAINING THE IEM?

QQI will provide clarity and information about what will be required of IEM applicants through a series of information briefings. We will also apply objectivity in the application of the agreed criteria and in the decision-making process.

### HOW CAN QQI ENSURE THAT IEM INSPECTORS ARE IMPARTIAL?

QQI has extensive experience with assessments of both further and higher education providers. Panels will be formed by experts in ELE from Ireland and other countries.

### WILL QQI WORK IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO ENSURE THAT ELEMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND VISA REGULATIONS THAT MIGHT BE BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THE ELE PROVIDER ARE ADHERED TO?

QQI will engage with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Justice throughout the development and application of the IEM. The operation of the visa system is a matter for the Department of Justice.

### CAN I APPEAL A DECISION IF MY SCHOOL IS REFUSED THE IEM?

There will be a statutory independent appeal process for the IEM.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE



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#### WILL THE IEM APPLY TO ELE IN BOTH A PRIVATE AND PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT?

Quality assurance of ELE programmes will apply to all ELE and private HE providers. The academic and corporate governance structure of ELE provision within a public HE context will determine whether that provider must apply through the ELE or HE pathways, or both.

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#### WILL ONLINE DELIVERY BE ACCEPTED AS FORMALISED QUALITY PROVISION?

All types of delivery will be subject to quality assurance.

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#### WILL IEM AUTHORISATION BE OPEN TO SMALL REGIONAL LANGUAGE SCHOOLS OFFERING SHORT TERMS COURSES TO EU STUDENTS?

All types of ELE providers are invited to apply for the IEM. Quality assurance will be based on the assessment of English Language programmes rather than on final awards or credits.

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#### WHAT TYPE OF NON-ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT WILL BE ACCEPTABLE FOR SHORT STAY JUNIOR STUDENTS?

Quality assurance will be based on the academic programme itself rather than on awards.

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#### WILL THE FRAMEWORK ALLOW FOR A RANGE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES (SOCIAL, CULTURAL ETC) OR WILL THEY BE EXPLICITLY LANGUAGE OUTCOMES?

English Language programmes will be assessed based on their alignment to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and programmes should be designed based on learner needs. Providers may frame the alignment in terms of social and cultural outcomes within the English language context and links to the activity and events programmes may be linked to the English language programme. Quality assurance and compliance with other parts of the code will be assessed through a combination of desk-based review and site visits.

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#### SHOULD TEACHER MINIMUM LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS BE DIFFERENT FOR JUNIOR PROVIDERS?

Teachers for English Language programmes for juniors must:

- have a degree plus a recognised ELT qualification (in this case, providers should provide an induction on working with juniors)
- be a qualified primary or secondary school teacher and have a recognised qualification in teaching young learners and teens
- be in their final year of training to be a primary or secondary school teacher and have a recognised qualification in teaching young learners and teens.



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IS INFORMATION RE ACCOUNTS/LEGAL STATUS ETC TO BE INCLUDED ON APPLICATION OR SIMPLY TO BE AVAILABLE IN CASE OF INSPECTION?

Due diligence will be the first step in the application for the IEM. All information requested, including accounts, legal status, corporate governance etc, will be assessed to confirm that the provider satisfies criteria.

All relevant documentation will be part of the due diligence assessment of a provider and should be uploaded as part of the online application.

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STAFF IN SMALLER PROVIDERS OFTEN HAVE MULTIPLE ROLES WITHOUT DEDICATED DEPARTMENTS. COULD THEIR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE LOOK DIFFERENTLY THAN IT WOULD FOR A YEAR-ROUND LARGER ORGANISATION?

QQI works with very small providers as well as larger organisations and it is important that corporate governance is fit for purpose for each provider. Providers know their own business best so QQI recommends that providers decide their own corporate governance based on their size.

QQI understands that many provider owners/members of staff have multiple roles and this is acceptable. Providers must establish a separation of corporate governance and academic governance and this can be achieved by providers in different ways, eg inviting an external member of the board to be responsible for academic governance/decision-making.

## LEARNER PROTECTION FUND

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WILL MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER CURRENT LEARNER PROTECTION INSURANCE SCHEME BE ACCEPTED FOR THE IEM?

All providers must participate in the statutory Learner Protection Fund that will be administered by QQI. This scheme will cover all private providers across the ELE and HE sectors. Membership of any other learner protection scheme will not be accepted when applying for the IEM.

## FEES AND CHARGES

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WILL THE IEM BE AFFORDABLE FOR SMALLER PROVIDERS?

Fees and charges related to authorisation to use the IEM have not yet been considered.

There will be three main fees when applying for the IEM:

- Initial application fees (which cover due diligence, quality assurance and authorisation)
- Recurrent annual charge for the IEM
- Learner Protection annual charge



The initial application fees and annual charge for the IEM will be determined by QQI and approved by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The annual charge for the Learner Protection Fund will be set by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and determined by a number of factors including number of learners, learner profile and programme duration.

## INTERIM LIST OF ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS (ILEP)

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### HOW DOES THE IEM AFFECT THE ILEP SCHEME?

The IEM will ultimately replace the ILEP scheme. Access to visas and learner permissions will eventually reside in the awarding of the IEM.