



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

QUALITY AND QUALIFICATIONS IRELAND (QQI): CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

February 2022

Purpose of QQI's Consultation Framework: To present a series of guiding criteria that reflect, prompt, and communicate QQI's approach to consultation with its stakeholders.

Scope of the Consultation Framework: The Consultation Framework's guiding criteria apply to all forms of consultation undertaken by QQI, including published documentation, working groups, forums, and other engagements.

Intended benefit of the Consultation Framework: To provide a tailored reference point to QQI when conducting consultation, the success of which can be jointly evaluated with its stakeholders.

GUIDING CRITERION 1: ESTABLISHING MUTUAL BENEFIT

We believe that the attainment of our priorities and objectives is best pursued collaboratively and constructively. We recognise the value of mutual benefit and will seek to highlight this through our consultation processes.

Guiding Criterion:

The purpose, scope and intended benefit of a matter being brought for consultation will be clearly articulated.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Has some analysis been undertaken of the relative cost and benefit of a consultation process?
- Has the purpose of the matter brought for consultation been identified and its scope defined?
- Has the intended benefit(s) of the matter under consultation been articulated in a manner that is relevant to the stakeholder group being invited to contribute?
- Has the purpose, scope, and intended benefit been documented as part of, or as a supplement to, a consultation process?
- Have the internal objectives of the consultation process been identified by QQI?

An example of indicators that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion are:

- stakeholders understand the purpose of the consultation, its scope, and the intended benefit of matters brought to them for consultation.
- QQI's objectives in undertaking the consultation process have been met.

GUIDING CRITERION 2: KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

We work with a diverse range of public, private, and not-for-profit organisations, in the service of an equally diverse range of learners¹. We will aim to ensure that we are engaging with the right audiences during our consultation processes.

Guiding Criterion:

The audience to whom consultation is relevant will be established by QQI as part of its consultation planning.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Has there been analysis of the parties potentially impacted by the outcome of a consultation process?
- Where relevant, is the representative body of the sector being consulted with aware of the consultation and, if appropriate, has it contributed to the plan for consultation?
- Where consultation should include those not aligned with a formal structure or representative group, have targeted arrangements been made to include these individuals/organisations in the consultation process?
- Where there is a key relationship within an organisation, is that individual aware of a planned consultation?
- In determining consultation timelines, has consideration been given, as far as possible, to the internal governance requirements of those responding to consultations?
- Where a learner perspective is required, has the optimum approach to reaching these learners been discussed and planned?
- When engaging with smaller providers, have attempts been made to consult separately with groups with similar characteristics, so that they are receiving only information that is relevant to their context?
- Is the quality of the stakeholder data held by QQI assured?

¹ The word 'learners' is used to refer to all types of learners studying in many different types of learning settings across the ELE, FET and HE landscape. These include but are not limited to, apprentices, trainees, English language learners, international learners, and higher education and further education and training students. Here we focus on what all these learners have in common, namely, learning.

- Have data protection, and other protocols for confidential contributions to consultation been applied?
- Where a consultation process, and its outcome(s), is published on the QQI website, are stakeholders routinely informed?

Examples of indicators that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion are:

- where appropriate and beneficial, representative bodies confirm that they have been involved by QQI, in the planning of consultation within their sectors.
- individual providers and organisations confirm that the consultation and engagement undertaken with them has been inclusive and has had regard to their context.
- the currency and completeness of QQI's stakeholder data has been kept under review.
- stakeholders are consistently alerted to the publication of consultation documentation on the QQI website.

GUIDING CRITERION 3: PROVIDING NOTICE OF CONSULTATION

We acknowledge that engaging with consultation processes requires the commitment of resources by our stakeholders. We will endeavour to provide advance notice where consultation plans are known.

Guiding Criterion:

QQI will confirm in advance the known areas upon which it intends consulting with stakeholders over a given period.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Do consultation plans align with undertakings given in the annual corporate plan, service level agreements with government departments, memoranda of understanding with fellow agencies, or other confirmed commitments?
- Have draft plans been communicated internally?
- Have plans for substantial stakeholder engagement been shared with other national parties with a view to avoiding consultation burden?
- Do agreed consultation plans include details of purpose, scope and intended benefit?
- Is there an agreed approach to communicating consultation plans to stakeholders?
- When follow-through on planned consultation has been delayed, have stakeholders been informed?

Examples of indicators that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion are:

- stakeholders consider they have been given notice of the known priority areas that QQI intends consulting upon over a given period.
- stakeholders feel informed about what has happened after they have participated in a consultation process.

GUIDING CRITERION 4: EXTENDING CONSULTATION TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

We recognise that the introduction of a new or revised policy, procedure or initiative can impact our stakeholders. Where helpful, we will extend our consultation processes to include feedback on implementation.

Guiding Criterion:

Consultation will be used to support the early implementation of a policy or initiative.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider:

- Does the matter being consulted upon represent a substantial change in practice?
- Is the impact on QQI of the implementation of a policy approach or initiative known?
- Is the impact on those required to implement the policy approach or initiative known?
- Has a response to the themes arising in consultation outcomes been documented and published?
- Are there opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the evaluation of policy approaches and initiatives as part of a development, implementation, and review cycle?

Examples of indicators that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion are:

- QQI routinely gives consideration to how consultation could be used to support the early implementation of a policy or initiative.
- responses to themes arising in consultation outcomes are documented and published by QQI.
- stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of policy approaches and initiatives as part of a documented cycle of development, implementation, and review.

GUIDING CRITERION 5: SCHEDULING CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

We understand that communication is important, and we see regular engagement as being an extension of our consultation processes.

Guiding Criterion:

QQI will engage with stakeholders for whom it plays a regulatory role, and with fellow national agencies, at regular intervals.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Is there centralised organisational knowledge of QQI's scheduled engagements with stakeholders?
- Is it known to stakeholders how QQI will engage with them over a given period?

An example of an indicator that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion is:

- stakeholders are aware of when and how they will engage with QQI over a given period.

GUIDING CRITERION 6: USING COMMUNICATION TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN CONSULTATION

We think that consultation can be aided by effective supporting communication. Communication strategies will be identified as part of our consultation planning.

Guiding Criterion:

QQI will use communications strategically to support participation in its consultation processes.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Is analysis of communication supports to aid participation in consultation an identifiable stage of consultation planning?
- Has collaborative thought been given to the most appropriate communication supports to aid participation in a consultation process?
- In the context of a published document for consultation, has a summary of key points been documented?

Examples of indicators that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion are:

- QQI has formalised the consideration of communication as a strategic stage in its consultation planning.
- stakeholders confirm they are being assisted in participating in consultation processes through the communications strategies used.

GUIDING CRITERION 7: CONFIRMING CONSULTATION PARAMETERS

We recognise that there are aspects of our work that are not subject to change. When consulting, those parameters will be identified where they exist, and contributions will be sought where they can have impact.

Guiding Criterion:

Where aspects of policy approaches or initiatives are not subject to change through consultation, this will be indicated.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Are there aspects of a policy approach or initiative under consultation that are legislatively dictated or beyond the prerogative of QQI?
- Are there aspects of a policy approach or initiative under consultation that QQI will need to fulfil in a specified manner to be consistent with existing policies or initiatives?

An example of an indicator that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion is:

- stakeholders believe they are clear on the areas of consultation in which they can have most impact.

GUIDING CRITERION 8: MANAGING AND GOVERNING CONSULTATION

We know that establishing effective consultation processes is complex. We will aim to develop an increasingly coordinated internal system of management and governance to strengthen, monitor, and continuously improve our implementation of this Consultation Framework.

Guiding Criterion:

QQI will establish a coordinated system of governance and management to support the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of its Consultation Framework.

In meeting this criterion, QQI will consider the following:

- Has the governance oversight role of the Board and its Committees for the Consultation Framework been confirmed and communicated?
- Have management oversight responsibilities for the Consultation Framework been confirmed and communicated?
- Have implementation responsibilities for consultation processes that take place under the Consultation Framework been confirmed and communicated?
- Has project and programme management been harnessed to support the effective implementation of the Consultation Framework?

An example of an indicator that could assist QQI in evaluating this criterion is:

- the governance and management roles for the oversight and implementation of the Consultation Framework have been documented, communicated, and implemented.