

QQI Review Report 2022

Inaugural Review

of Tipperary Education and Training Board



QQI REVIEW

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Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that providers have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI conducts external reviews of providers of further and higher education and training on a cyclical basis. QQI is currently conducting the inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards. Cyclical review is an element of the broader quality framework for ETBs composed of statutory quality assurance guidelines; quality assurance approval; annual quality reporting; dialogue meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; validation of programmes; and, most crucially, the quality assurance system established by each ETB. The inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards runs from 2020-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the sixteen education and training boards. On conclusion of the sixteen reviews, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying system-level observations and findings.

The inaugural review evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each ETB with a particular focus on the arrangements for the governance and management of quality; teaching, learning and assessment; and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. These are considered in the context of the expectations set out in the relevant QQI statutory quality assurance guidelines and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures.

The review methodology is based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to review:

- a self-evaluation conducted by the provider, resulting in the production of a self-evaluation report;
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This inaugural review of Tipperary Education and Training Board was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference at Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team.

The Review Team

Each inaugural review is carried out by a team of independent experts and peers. The 2022 inaugural review of Tipperary Education and Training Board was conducted by a team of 6 reviewers selected by QQI. The review team attended a briefing and training session in QQI on 23 and 24 November 2022 and the planning visit to Tipperary Education and Training Board took place on 09 December 2021. The main review visit was conducted by the full team between 7 -11 February 2022.

Chair

After retiring from further education as a lecturer in travel and tourism in 2009, Phil Whitney set up PW Consultancy Services specialising in education and customer service training. He was commissioned to prepare reports on behalf of the Welsh Government on the requirements and developments of EQARF related to National Qualifications Frameworks in the UK, and on the implementation of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) in Wales.

In May 2013, the Welsh Government passed the operational management of all the European VET initiatives to Colleges Wales. Phil was asked to join as a consultant specifically to continue work with EQAVET and also cover Cedefop and ReferNet activity. He has led on EQAVET activities since then and has represented the UK at Peer Learning Activities and working groups. He has also made frequent presentations on EQAVET developments in Wales at EQAVET Annual Forums and Network Meetings, as well as the European Training Foundation. Since Brexit he has continued to work with Colleges Wales delivering the requirements of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) alignment contract. He is currently involved in a joint Ecctis/British Council project to support the enhancement of TVET provision in Vietnam.

In 2012 Phil was appointed as an ECVET Expert for the UK and has been involved in dissemination and training activities to promote the use of ECVET for mobility since then. He has been an Erasmus+ assessor since 2015.

Coordinating Reviewer

Professor Vicky Duckworth has developed an international reputation for her research in Adult education and Literacy. Alongside Rob Smith, Vicky led the ground-breaking Transforming Lives

project which aimed to showcase the benefits of education throughout life. ¹

She has published widely and is an active member of a number of national and international organisations. Vicky's research has a strong social justice and theoretical focus, for example, she has drawn on a critical perspective, applying Bourdieu's work as the theoretical framework, as well as using a range of feminist, sociologists of education, literature on the ethics of care and critical literacy pedagogy, including the New Literacy Studies to explore and add to the debate on the impact of violence and trauma on learning and its link to class, gender and basic skills. Vicky was a member of the 2019 Lifelong Learning Commission and is a founder member of Right2Learn².

Learner Representative

Anna Jakobek is a passionate, committed individual who wishes to inspire people to continue their educational path. She has worked hard over the past couple of months and has many impressive accomplishments such as being part of the Washington Ireland Program, interviews for Echo, RedFM and 96FM, Vice Chairperson of the Learners Voices Group and Student Representative at Mayfield Training Centre.

She is now a student at Cork College of Commerce and continues to work hard to make access to education easier for everyone.

Peer Expert

Dr M.J.H. (Marianne) van der Weiden graduated in psychology (1978) and classical culture and languages (1986). Her PhD dissertation (1991) was on the Dithyrambs of Pindar.

She has extensive experience in accreditation and quality assurance in higher education and has been involved in educational policy in vocational and higher education.

She has worked as a policy advisor for the Association of Universities in the Netherlands, at the outset of the system of peer reviews (1987-1998), as Academic Registrar at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (1998-2004) and as manager Strategy and Education for the Association of VET colleges (2004-2012).

Since 2012, she has been working as an independent self-employed secretary and project manager (www.mariannevanderweiden.nl). She is on the NVAO list of certified secretaries.

¹ <http://transforminglives.web.ucu.org.uk/>

² <https://right2learn.co.uk/our-team/>

Peer Expert

Dr Fionnuala Anderson worked in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector for more than 40 years. Her most recent post was Director of Further Education and Training in Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). Prior to that, she held management positions in SOLAS/FÁS in a number of key operational and policy development areas. She attained a degree, masters and doctorate in Education and Training Management. Through both her career and professional development, she gained extensive knowledge and experience of FET.

Her view of learning as a process during which knowledge and meaning is socially constructed, and the potential of learning for the empowerment of learners was a key driving force in her work and professional development, and shaped her particular interest in quality assurance, including teaching and learning.

Fionnuala led the development, implementation and review of quality assurance in DDLETB and was Chair of an ETBI group shaping the development of quality assurance across all ETBs. She has been a panel member in the validation of programmes in the Higher Education and FET sector.

Industry Representative

Breda Flaherty, Master's in Education Training & Development from Sheffield University and Graduate from University of Limerick. An experienced HR professional with 30+ years in industry with multinational businesses and a wealth of knowledge across Organisational Development, HR Operations, Employee Relations, Employment Law, Employee Engagement & Health & Safety.

Throughout her career she has worked across a variety of sectors including manufacturing, automotive technology, medical device, and most recently agricultural technology with her current employer DairyMaster, a world leading manufacturer of dairy farm equipment.

She provides strategic direction and oversight to leadership teams to further progress and evolve their business and grow their people. I am passionate about further developing the industries I work in and have held many roles and partnerships with Education Institutes over the years to help futureproof workforces and meet growing demands of industries.



Section

1

Introduction and Context

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Tipperary Education and Training Board (Tipperary ETB) is one of 16 ETBs established under the provisions of the Education and Training Boards Act (2013). The commencement of this legislation in 2013 resulted in both North Tipperary Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and South Tipperary VEC amalgamating to become Tipperary ETB. The 2013 legislation resulted in the establishment of an tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS) and the dissolution of Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS). SOLAS works with the ETBs to support the development of appropriate further education and training (FET) programmes and curricula. Tipperary ETB formally assumed responsibility for training services in Tipperary on 28 March 2016. Tipperary ETB has statutory responsibility to develop, provide, support, coordinate, administer and evaluate a wide range of education services. The ETB plays a significant role in the strategic development of the county through a variety of inter-agency initiatives. This is catalysed and sustained through pro-actively forging positive and productive links with other institutions and bodies and, importantly, through providing crucial support to other agencies to effectively deliver education and training programmes. Geographically, County Tipperary is located in the province of Munster and covers 4,305km². According to the 2016 census, Tipperary has a population of 160,441. The largest towns are Clonmel, Nenagh and Thurles. County Tipperary was divided into two ridings in 1838, North and South, for administrative purposes. In June 2014, the two ridings were reunified to form one county following the local elections (Tipperary County Council).

Tipperary, consisting of beautiful landscape, is the largest landlocked county in Ireland and sixth largest of the 32 counties by area and the 12th largest by population. The population increased by 0.5% between the years 2011 and 2016 which was significantly less than the national average of 3.8%. With a population of circa 160,000 people, there were nearly 60,000 households in the county in 2016 with an average household size of 2.7, equalling the national average. The average age of the population of Tipperary is between 37.7 years and 38.5 years (2016 CSO figures) and is in line with the national average 37.4 years. The population aged 18 years and under in 2016 totalled 42,869 or 26.9% of the population.

Rank	Town	Population (2016 census)
1	Clonmel	17,140
2	Nenagh	8,968
3	Thurles	7,940
4	Carrick-on-Suir	5,771
5	Roscrea	5,446
6	Tipperary	4,979
7	Cashel	4,422
8	Cahir	3,593
9	Ballina	2,632
10	Templemore	1,939
11	Fethard	1,545



Population per Town in Tipperary

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In relation to education, 34.8% of the population achieved third level education in 2016, compared to the national average of 42%, with 26.3% having lower second level or below education levels, in line with the national average of 27%. 14.2% of the population of Tipperary aged 15 years and over have no formal, or primary only education, compared to the national average of 7%.

When considering incomes, the average in Tipperary is significantly less than the national average and with regard to deprivation, by far the greater part of the county is marginally below average on the Pobal Index. For statistical purposes, dependents are defined as people outside the normal working age of 15-64 years. Tipperary has an age dependency of 36.6% (2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas). Further analysis reveals there are a number of disadvantaged areas associated primarily with urban centres but there are no areas classified either as affluent or as extremely disadvantaged. The active Tipperary workforce was 74,339 (this includes unemployed looking for first regular job and unemployed having lost or given up previous job) compared to 2,304,037 nationally (2016 Census).

In relation to disability, 14.8% of the population was recorded as having a disability. This is higher than the national average of 13.5%. Lone parents account for 21.71%, and 9% of the population were non-Irish nationals, less than the national average of 11.6%. According to statistics, 2% cannot speak English or cannot speak it well. This compares with 14% nationally. The white Irish Traveller community amounts to 0.77% of the population in Tipperary as compares with a national figure of 0.65% (2016 census).

³ Tipperary ETB Self-Evaluation Report, p 8

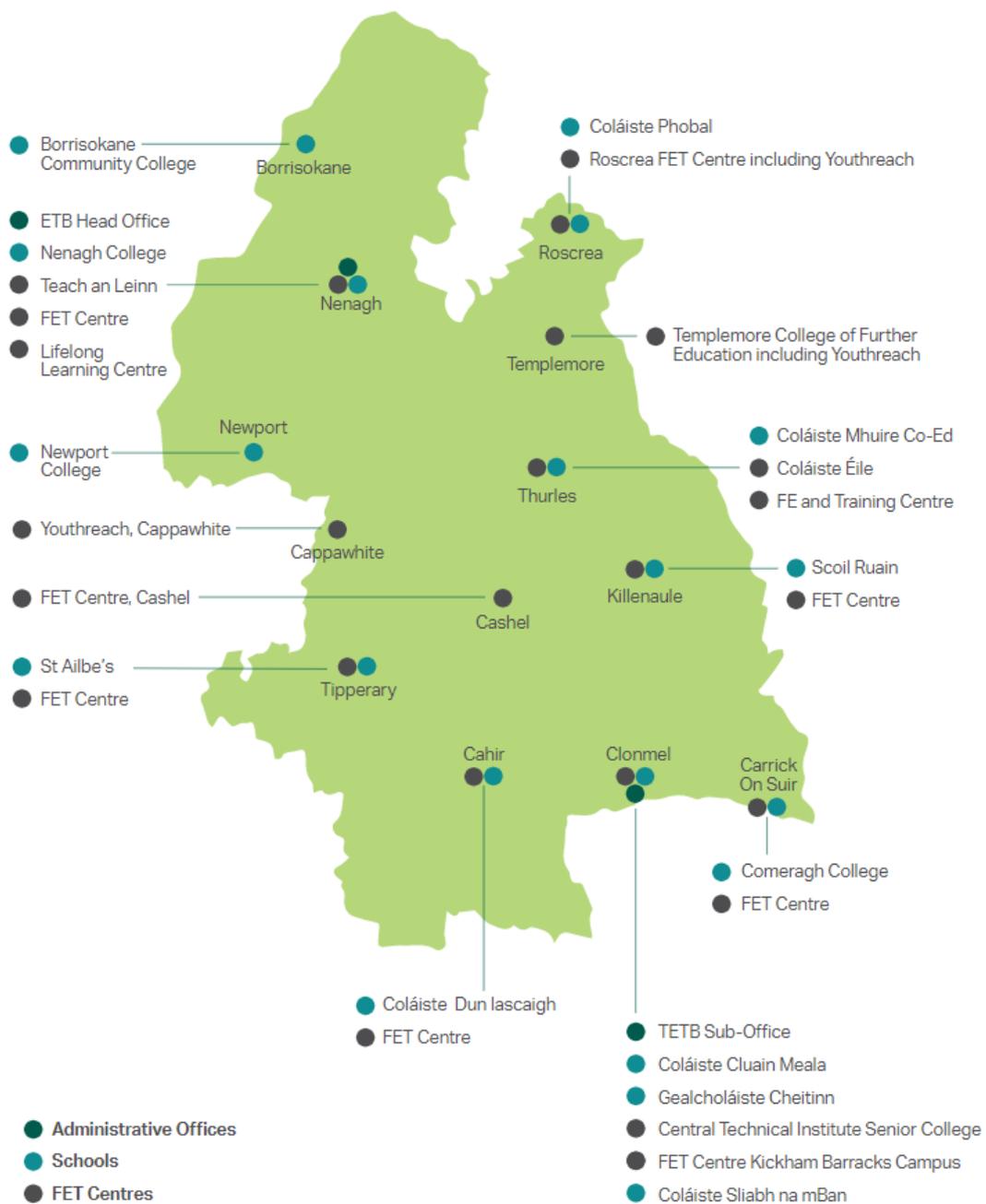
The number of unemployed, numbers of people (with some exceptions) registering for Jobseekers Benefit or Allowance or for various other statutory entitlements (Live Register numbers, 2021), amounted to 6,740. This is an unemployment rate of 3.65% against a national rate of 6.5% and indicated that the unemployment rate in Tipperary is below the national average. The rate does vary across the county with higher rates being experienced, particularly in some smaller urban centres.

There are 79 unemployment blackspots identified by the Electoral Division in Ireland, i.e., where the unemployment rate was considered high in comparison to the national average. Tipperary has two unemployment blackspots with an average unemployment rate of 30.8% compared to a county unemployment rate in 2016 of 14.6%:

- Tipperary East Urban, South Tipperary: 34.0%
- Carrick-on-Suir Urban, Tipperary: 29.2% (Census 2016 Summary Results)

Tipperary ETB's delivery of education extends to the county's diverse communities, including:

- 10 Post Primary Schools.
- One stand alone and five other PLC Centres.
- One All Irish Second Level Unit.
- Education provision at Coláiste Sliabh na mBan.
- Providing a range of further education and training programmes and services.
- Administering a range of support services including youth services.
- Acting as a patron on the Board of Management of Cashel Community School.



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The FET Division is responsible for the management, operation, and delivery of full-time and part-time education across locations in Tipperary (see Figure 1 and Appendix I from Tipperary ETB's Self-evaluation report (SER)).

⁴ Tipperary ETB Self-Evaluation Report, p 7

Appendix I – FET Colleges/Centres

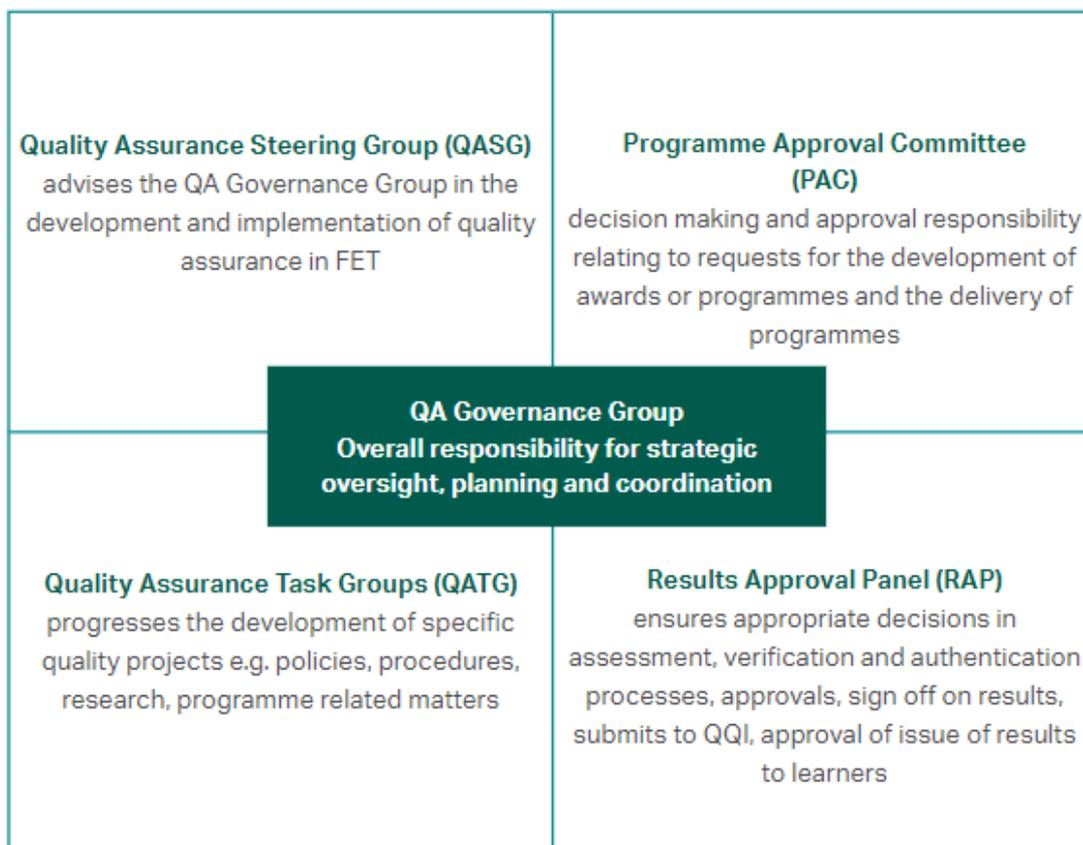
Borrisokane	Borrisokane Community College (School) FET Centre
Cahir	Coláiste Dún Iascaigh (School) FET Centre (Former Vocational School)
Cappawhite	Youthreach
Carrick-on-Suir	Comeragh College (School) FET Centre (Former Vocational School)
Cashel	FET Centre (Former Vocational School)
Clonmel	Tipperary ETB Sub-Office (Administrative Office) Raheen College (School) Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn (School) Central Technical Institute Senior College (FET Centre) FET Centre Kickham Barracks Campus Coláiste Shliabh na mBan (School)
Killenaule	Scoil Ruáin (School) FET Centre (Former Vocational School)
Nenagh	Tipperary ETB Head Office (Administrative Office) Nenagh College (School) Teach an Léinn (FET Centre) Lifelong Learning Centre (FET Centre)
Newport	Newport College (School)
Roscrea	Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré (School) Roscrea FET Centre including Youthreach
Templemore	Templemore College of Further Education including Youthreach
Thurles	Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed (School) Coláiste Éile (FET Centre) FET Centre, Archerstown
Tipperary Town	FET Centre (Tipperary Technology Park/Tipperary Community Centre)

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Tipperary ETB has undergone recent significant change. Indeed, the ETB has transitioned over the past two years to a new organisational and development structure that aims to ensure that support services are adding value to frontline education and training services. Further education and training (FET) have seen extensive change resulting in the establishment of training services in 2016 and the expansion of provision right across the FET spectrum. Numbers in FET provision grew to over 12,000 in 2019. To underpin Tipperary ETB's strong commitment to quality assurance, a new development and support structure was established in 2020 that relocated and restructured the Quality assurance office and functions and, importantly, learner support structures.

⁵ Tipperary ETB Self-Evaluation Report, p 163

Structure of Tipperary ETB's QA Governance System



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The inaugural review of Tipperary ETB was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic and its associated restrictions, e.g., 'lockdowns', social distancing, the 'work-from-home' rules, had an impact on Tipperary ETB's activities and services. However, the review team found that the ETB addressed the changing barriers and obstacles in a proactive and inspirational manner which continued to place the learner at the heart of everything they do. This included innovative and meaningful digital pedagogical approaches. Indeed, since March 2020, a high number of FET activity has moved from face-to-face delivery to models that incorporate online and blended learning.

In addition, Tipperary ETB has experienced the full and partial closure of centres. Staff adopted new and often creative ways of working to meet the needs of the community they served. Learners adopted different approaches to learning which were challenging but also rewarding. They continued to flourish through the digital platform which united them with their teacher and peers.

The review team recognises the considerable work that the educators have invested during a time of transition due to restrictions and the impact that these have had on their professional roles. Tipperary

⁶ Tipperary ETB Provider Profile, p 37

ETB's self-evaluation report and preparation for the inaugural review of quality assurance demonstrates Tipperary ETB's outstanding commitment to the population of Tipperary and service to its diverse communities. Tipperary ETB's preparation and response to questions and discussions during the inaugural review visit are to be commended. The review team found the ETB to be professional, caring, knowledgeable, comprehensive and well-informed.



Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-Evaluation

Methodology

In response to the publication of Quality and Qualifications of Ireland (QQI) guidelines and terms of reference to facilitate the external review of quality assurance within ETBs, Tipperary ETB commissioned an independent consultant, with expertise in QA and FET, to assist the FET management team in its review of QA policies, procedures and structures in Tipperary ETB. A series of meetings between the consultant and Chief executive and also the consultant and FET Senior Management Team (SMT), members of the QA Steering Group and the QA Officer were held. The outcome of this review was a report to the Chief Executive which detailed the short and medium to long term priorities as well as an inaugural review process action plan and corresponding timeline. In 2020, the organisational structure in terms of FET went through significant change. April 2020 saw the appointment of a new Director of FET (DFET), followed by the creation of a FET Development and Support Unit in November. Managed by a newly appointed Adult Education Officer (AEO), this unit included a restructured FET QA Office. The FET Development and Support Unit was assigned responsibility for the coordination of the self-evaluation process, with the support of the FET SMT and the Director of FET. The research team, including the FET QA office, comprised members with the competence, expertise, skills and knowledge to complete the self-evaluation process. The Covid-19 pandemic affected data collection methodologies during the self-evaluation process and potentially influenced (but not defined) some of the research findings. While the self-evaluation journey in 2020 and 2021 is not defined by the COVID-19 pandemic it is important to highlight that it affected a number of the data collection methodologies during the process and potentially framed some of the research findings. The use of additional methodologies in the primary research, for example, more face-to-face interviews, on site meetings with employers, personal accounts and more case study research may have provided more data, and perhaps richer data, to areas requiring a deeper dive or where the research findings could have been better informed by the stakeholder voice. A further challenge was the change in review coordinator role mid-project, an unexpected setback that was promptly managed and resolved leading to minimal impact on the process and outcome. Drawing on the terms of reference set by QQI, the self-evaluation reporting format was driven by the review and presentation of three areas:

- Governance and Management of Quality
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review.

The self-evaluation report (SER) includes the findings from this review, including an evaluation and conclusion.

Tipperary ETB engaged a variety of self-evaluation methodologies to address the terms of reference. commencing in February 2021, primary and secondary research processes ran concurrently in a seven-month self-evaluation consultation period. The primary research consisted of surveys, focus groups, interviews, meetings, observations, SWOT analyses; gathering both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the evaluation. Primary research included consultation with learners, staff and stakeholders. Secondary research consisted of a desk review of all FET quality assurance policies and procedures, both documented and undocumented, analysing existing data (Information, statistics, evidence, reports, meeting minutes) for a broader understanding. Participants in the research were assured of their anonymity, that the survey was voluntary, and that the information collected was for research purposes to enhance the ETB's teaching and learning service. The review team was impressed by the Tipperary ETB's self-evaluation methodology and robust SER.

To identify common themes and patterns, a thematic analysis was put in place, which allowed the extraction and examination of qualitative data from the primary research, desk review and the quantitative survey data. To support the analysis, relevant published reports were considered in the self-evaluation process, e.g., Tipperary ETB's Executive Self-Evaluation Report (2018), Tipperary ETB's Statement of Strategy, Service Plans, Annual Reports, ETB SOLAS Strategic Performance Agreements, The National FET Strategy, Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs), QIP Progress Reports, AONTAS National FET Learner Forum Report etc. The review team is of the opinion that the results of the thematic analysis, the quantitative survey data, the SWOT along with the methodical desk review, provided Tipperary ETB with very rich and meaningful data to inform the evaluation.

The key milestones for the methodological journey:



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⁷ Tipperary ETB Self-Evaluation Report, p 16

Section

3

Quality Assurance & Enhancement



Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

ETB Mission & Strategy

Tipperary ETB's board consists of 21 members: 12 members elected by local authorities, two members of staff, two parent representatives and five members with specialist knowledge of education and training. Representatives of Tipperary ETB board confirmed to the review team that the 2019 Code of Practice for Governance of Education and Training Boards has been adopted and that Tipperary ETB complies with the up-to-date requirements of the code in their governance practices and procedures.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the oversight of all Tipperary ETB's activities, including further education and training. The Director of FET has operational responsibility for the coordination and management of the ETB's FET services and activities and reports to the Chief Executive.

The review team finds that Tipperary ETB is committed to maintaining the balance between skills required for the local economy with the wider benefits of learning that are an intrinsic part of further education, in addition to having a mission to provide a quality education and training service, that creates diverse opportunities, enabling learners and communities to unlock their potential.

The review team finds there is a vision in Tipperary ETB to be a progressive organisation that enriches lives, offering innovative education and training opportunities to all.

The Tipperary ETB Statement of Strategy was developed following significant and ongoing consultation with key stakeholders for the period 2018-2022. The Statement of Strategy was the first since the merger of North and South Tipperary VECs in 2013 and maps Tipperary ETB's plan for the period. Four goals were identified in the Statement of Strategy, as follows:

- Lead the development of quality provision to meet the education and training needs of learners and the wider community engaging with Tipperary ETB
- Continue to build an effective and progressive organisation and adhere to best practice in Corporate Governance and Compliance

- Develop modern, dynamic, learning and working environments and embrace innovation and technologies in support of learners and staff
- Communicate and collaborate in an effective manner to reinforce inclusivity and promote our organisation.

This is underpinned by Tipperary ETB's Strategic Performance Agreement (2018-2020) with SOLAS that sets out the context, strategic priorities, and Tipperary ETB's contribution to the achievement of national FET sector targets. A renewed agreement is currently being developed. The review team notes that Tipperary ETB has performed well against a number of the six-core national FET sector targets over the period 2018-2020, with labour market progression, progression to Higher Education and FET engagement actuals significantly lower than targets, as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on employment opportunities and learner engagement, particularly in 2020 (Note: Figures subject to change – SOLAS/CSO Data Gathering Protocols).

Target	National Sectoral Target	Tipperary ETB Contribution (Target)	Actuals (CSO) 2020 ⁸
More learners securing employment from provision which primarily serves the labour market	10% over 3 years	48% over 3 years, equating to 618 learners securing employment in 2020	345
More learners progressing to other further or higher education courses from provision which is primarily focused on this purpose	10% over 3 years	10% over 3 years, equating to 962 learners progressing to other courses in 2020	558
Increase in the rate of certification on courses primarily focused on transversal (social mobility) skills development	10% over 3 years	10% over 3 years, equating to 421 completers certified in 2020	301
Increase in adults seeking FET level provision engaging in lifelong learning interventions	10% over 3 years	13% over 3 years, equating to 7,615 starting LLL relevant programmes in 2020	3955
Increase in learners securing relevant qualifications in sectors where employment growth/skills needs have been identified	10,000 learners per annum	Average annual increase of 342 and a 47% increase in learners in 2020 compared with 2017	1011
New apprenticeship and trainee registrations in the period 2018 to 2020	13,900 over 3 years	258 over 3 years, more than a five-fold increase	311

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The review team is of the opinion that Tipperary ETB's objectives are aligned with their vision and mission and the strategic goals and priorities of the organisation. The core values of the organisation are reflected in the strong learner-centred approach across all aspects of their work.

The review team heard during the main review visit that learners feel their voice matters and that staff have a commitment to a quality culture throughout the organisation. However, the review team finds that there is a need to increase opportunities for staff to make an effective contribution to the development of strategy, policy, and procedures relevant to their area of work. The staff survey for the SER indicated that just under 50% of staff felt they had opportunities to make effective contributions to strategy, policy, and procedures relevant to their area of work. Approximately the same percentage

⁸ Tipperary ETB Self-Evaluation Report, p 32

of staff expressed in the survey, a willingness, responsibility and acceptance that they have a role in the improvement of quality. Although these are encouraging responses there should be wider opportunities for staff to engage, and contribute, towards policy and strategy decisions and improvements in quality assurance.

The review team finds there are good examples of Tipperary ETB responding to the diverse needs of the community they serve through programmes. This includes Adult Literacy courses, complemented by the literacy service, which the review team views as having a robust model of work placement. In addition, the review team heard that the ETB is working very closely with migrant groups and apprentices, particularly in the building industry, with the aim giving as much support as possible in facilitating the effective trajectories of often marginalised communities.

The review team heard evidence during the main review visit of Tipperary ETB's support for disadvantaged or marginalised groups, evidenced through the integration of refugees into FET provision and the Roma working group. The evidence was demonstrated in a presentation by learners and staff who work with marginalised groups and the FET management team.

Commendation

- The review team recognises that Tipperary ETB are strongly aware of their areas of strengths and development as made explicit in the SER.

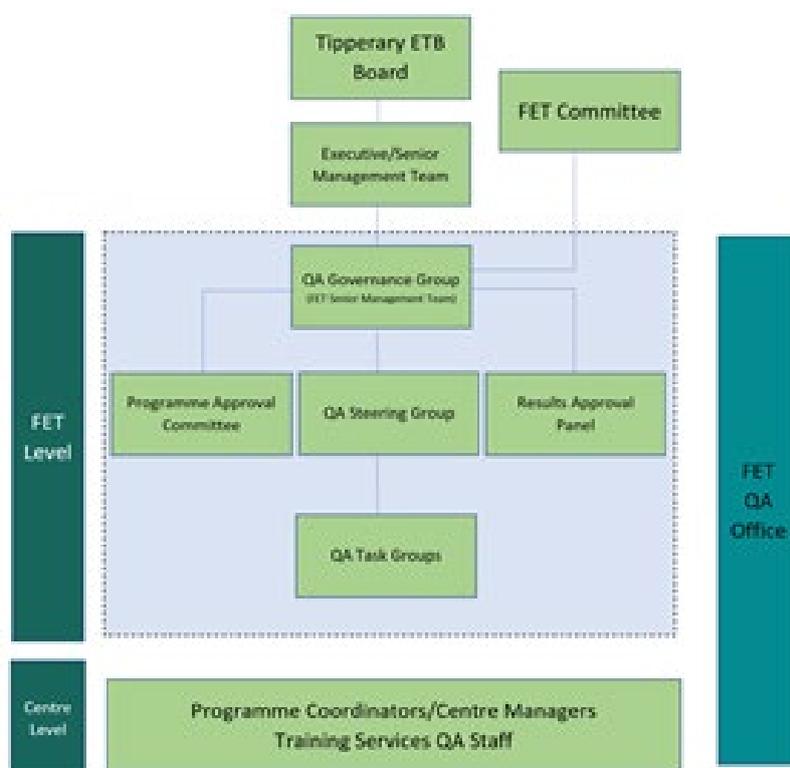
Recommendation

- The review team recommends Tipperary ETB seek to develop an internal communications mechanism to increase opportunities for staff to engage in review, consultation and planning.

Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance

In order to meet QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines, Tipperary ETB has established structures for the governance and management of its internal quality assurance. This includes a Quality Assurance Governance Group, a Programme Approval Committee (PAC) and a Quality Assurance Steering Group (QASG). A Results Approval Panel (RAP) is also in place. Terms of reference are available for each group outlining roles and responsibilities, and the requirement for members to have the relevant expertise to fulfil their role. The terms of reference for governance groups are published

on Tipperary ETB's website⁹. These terms of reference were developed in line with QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and specify the composition of each of the sub-groups,



The QA Steering Group (QASG) oversees the development and implementation of Tipperary ETB's QA policies and procedures and reports to the QA governance group. There are nine members of the group who are required to have substantial knowledge and experience of education and training programmes and provision and will have a significant understanding of quality assurance. The review team felt that this group would be enhanced by the addition of external representation from appropriate stakeholders, such as learners and employers. The ETB rotates members across groups. The ETB acknowledges in its SER, that while this works well in some groups, it is challenging to implement in other groups due to availability of staff with the required expertise. This leads to duplication of members across some governance groups. During the visit the review team heard from the QA Governance group that some of the quality sub-groups were changing structure to broaden representation and include external stakeholders.

The Quality Assurance Governance Group is made up of the members of the FET Senior Management Team, and meetings of both groups are held on the same day on a monthly basis. The review team recognises the commitment of the FET Management Team to Quality Assurance and

⁹ <https://tipperary.etb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/TETBs-QA-GovernanceTerms-of-Reference-Dec2021.pdf>

notes that holding consecutive meetings with the same group of people is sometimes challenging, as confirmed also within the SER.

The review team heard evidence that communication channels between the governance groups are in place. Reports and minutes from the sub-groups feed into the Quality Assurance Governance Group, and decisions from the Quality Assurance Governance Group feed into the sub-groups. The review team was made aware that whereas this facilitated the exchange of information, sometimes there was a delay in communications because of meeting schedules.

The review team examined the SER and heard evidence from both management and staff in the main review visit that confirmed that Tipperary ETB is committed to implementing one Quality Assurance system. The review team finds that the ETB ensures documented policies and procedures are in place across all provision, services and other related activities. A quality policy and procedure for the development of procedures is in place. The ETB plans to consolidate 4 legacy QA agreements as a priority. The review team noted that a plan is in place to achieve this by 2025, and the review team acknowledges that work is underway. The review team noted Tipperary ETB's commitment to implementing a single QA system. This will include a single set of assessment procedures, to become accessible on the ETB's website¹⁰, for implementation across the ETB.

Commendations

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB for the establishment of its governance groups, and the ongoing review and evolution of the Terms of Reference to ensure the quality assurance of its provision.
- The review team commends the publication and introduction of an integrated set of quality assurance procedures in the area of assessment which are being used by staff and learners.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB terms of reference for Quality Assurance Governance be reviewed to consider changing structure to broaden representation and include appropriate internal and external stakeholders.

¹⁰ <https://tipperary.etb.ie/further-education/quality-assurance/qa-policies-and-procedures-for-assessment-2/>

Documentation of Quality Assurance

The review team finds that the documentation provided to the team (based on the ETB's self-evaluation and analysis) was detailed and extensive. These documents described the process, policies and procedures used by the ETB to support and manage quality assurance. The documentation produced and collated for the review team underwent analysis which was detailed in the ETB's substantial self-evaluation report. These key documents provided a sharp lens for exploring, describing and probing the process, policies and procedures implemented by the ETB to facilitate, support and manage quality assurance.

The FET QA Office, QA Steering Group and/or a QA Task Group primarily is responsible for the development of QA policies and procedures as confirmed in the SER and during the review visit, with the QA Governance Group responsible for approval. In 2019, the Internal Verification (IV) process and exams procedures were implemented. In 2021, a new Results Approval Process (RAP) was introduced. Newly developed policies and procedures are available for Tipperary ETB staff on their website and on the ETB's SharePoint. Indeed, in 2020 Tipperary ETB welcomed the roll out of the new QA SharePoint (QASP) site, a resource hub for Tipperary ETB staff to access information, validated programmes, modules, descriptors, QA forms, policies and procedures, RAP and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) dates. The review team heard that the QASP site keeps staff informed of QA news, updates and professional development as well as housing programme modules, descriptors and RAP reports. During the main review visit, staff confirmed to the review team that they are aware of the relevant policies and procedures and know where to access them. The review team agreed that this access point for disseminating and communicating key documents is commendable. However, the development process of QA policies and procedures seem relatively recent, June 2021, and the future impact of the effectiveness of the website and SharePoint will take time to provide a holistic picture of its usefulness. The review team was impressed to note that, since June 2021 there have been infographics and easy-to-read versions of a number of policies and procedures, especially those most relevant to learners, for example, information regarding reasonable accommodation.

The review team is of the opinion that there is a clear and cohesive procedure for drafting policies and procedures. They are developed to draft level with the support of the FET QA Office, QA Steering Group and/or a QA Task Group, before being presented for review and approval by the QA Governance Group. On approval, policies and procedures are passed to the Executive SMT for ratification and finally notified to the FET Committee and Tipperary ETB Board. The new policy or procedure is implemented and recommendations for amendments collated by the FET QA Office for periodic reviews and updates. In the case where policies or procedures are reviewed and deemed ineffective, they can be rescinded, amended or replaced.

It was noted by the review team that a number of policies and procedures in use are from previous organisations (North Tipperary VEC, South Tipperary VEC, etc.). The review team also considers the system for publicly accessing QA policies and procedures is potentially quite confusing. The ETB's website refers to the four legacy systems but does not emphasise the range of assessment procedures which are the integrated procedures. During the main review visit the review team heard evidence from staff that the documentation control procedure is intended for QA office staff to support document management and version control in a standardised way. However, the review team considers access should be extended to all staff.

The review team was impressed that documents were regularly updated and available for staff via SharePoint. The review team heard that there were also regular and systematic updates on policy and procedures by MS Teams Channels, emails etc. The strategy for ensuring that the latest versions of documents could be identified included, for example, dating them. In addition, in relation to feedback and changes to procedures, the review team finds this was successfully relayed through the line manager. The review team found it positive to see that a number of changes have been affected as a result of this cohesive communication flow between the ETB management and the teaching team.

The review team observed that there are challenges when working with legacy arrangements. In the main review visit, staff communicated that Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) are out of date and that the process of programme approval can be lengthy or delayed. The review team heard accounts from staff that there may be a move towards a more uniformed pedagogical approach. However, hearing staff note how a uniformed approach needs to be balanced with a holistic pedagogy which was supported by learners' accounts of their experiences, the review team are confident that a learner centred pedagogy will remain a pedagogical priority across Tipperary ETB. Indeed, in the SER and discussions in the main review visit, there was a key focus by Tipperary ETB to recognise that there needs to continue to be flexibility in relation to catering to different age groups and backgrounds of learners.

The review team noted that staff appear to be motivated and keen to implement new procedures and processes. Indeed, despite challenges which include, for example, the former legacy arrangements and a more integrated approach to introducing new systems, they appear to be working well. There was also an appreciation amongst staff of Tipperary ETB's commitment to improving quality assurance systems.

The review team ascertained that procedures are published on Tipperary ETB's website, but they are difficult to navigate as they reflect an integrated system for assessment procedures and 4 legacy systems for other procedures.

Indeed, with its establishment in 2013, Tipperary ETB inherited four legacy quality assurance agreements:

- North Tipperary VEC QA Agreement
- South Tipperary VEC QA Agreement
- Instituid Thuamhumhan QA Agreement
- Transitional Quality Assurance System (TQAS) QA Agreement¹¹ .

However, the review team finds there is very good communication amongst staff and learners at the centres. Staff and second providers appear to be well informed by managers about the integrated QA procedures for assessment and policies (proactive QA staff, SharePoint). They are given the opportunity to collaborate in updating the QA system. At the time of the review, harmonizing the legacy QA systems into one ETB-wide QA system is still a work in progress (assessment procedures are already integrated). The review team is of the opinion that a timeline for completion of this harmonisation should be established by the year's end. A quality policy and procedure development process is also in place. The review team encourages effective and dynamic leadership in order to continue to achieve such an integrated and accessible QA system.

The review team noted that, as outlined in the SER, Tipperary ETB does not have procedures covering the responsibility and governance of some areas including non-accredited provision, non QQI certification and contracted training. The review of Tipperary ETB's quality assurance policies, procedures, and structures indicated that governance and management of QA arrangements in these areas was less developed than in other areas of provision. The review team found QA procedures for these areas of provision were either on Tipperary ETB SharePoint or through individual contractors or Awarding Body websites. Although staff interviewed felt that they were aware of QA procedures in most areas, it was not clear to the review team if this access or availability was consistent across all programmes.

Commendation

- The review team noted that centres, staff and second providers are well informed about the QA assessment procedures and policies.

¹¹ Tipperary ETB Provider Profile, p 32

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that an integrated QA system is implemented within the proposed timeframe of 2025, if not earlier. The website should also be updated to include integrated procedures as work progresses. The review team recommends that one Quality Assurance system which ensures a robust set of documented policies and procedures are in place across all provision, services and other related activities is implemented as soon as possible. In the meantime, the team recommends that any potential disparities between the different legacy agreements are monitored effectively.
- The review team also recommends that procedures to cover the governance of training contracted under the contracted providers own QA arrangements are developed as soon as possible.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

The recruitment of staff for FET service delivery is driven, organised and managed by Tipperary ETB's Human Resource Unit. Importantly, for these staff the national agreements and procedures, which include for example, Garda vetting and aligning to Teaching Council regulations, are applied and implemented to their recruitment, management and development. The review team was impressed that Tipperary ETB seeks to be an equal opportunities employer, committed to equity throughout the recruitment process and aligning to best practice and meeting legislative requirements (Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015) and Disability Act (2005)), including Garda vetting and Teaching Council regulations.

Recruitment is carried out through a formal recruitment and selection procedure. All posts, including relevant downloadable documentation, are advertised in the vacancies section of the Tipperary ETB website and via email to all staff.

On hearing evidence from Tipperary ETB staff, the review team is of the opinion that the shortlisting process aligns with the assertion made in the SER and is both consistent and transparent. It is carried out by the senior managers in consultation with HR. The composition of all Selection Boards is in compliance with Department of Education regulations and considerate to the Board member's expertise in a particular field of FET. Recruitment and selection checks are conducted by HR, including the completion of the Garda Vetting process, a pre-employment online medical, submission of qualifications etc.

It is evident to the review team that HR support for FET staff operations is effective and consistent, and that their functions are carried out to a high standard, including identification of the need for roles,

notification to staff, production of job and person specifications, formation of independent interview boards with appropriate knowledge and subject matter expertise, including briefing of board members and interview question preparation, scoring and feedback.

A formal induction is facilitated annually for newly appointed staff at the beginning of the academic year. The review team heard evidence from staff that procedures in place for the induction of new staff members are well-established and work effectively. In 2020, due to the restrictions of Covid-19, an induction programme was delivered online. However, consultation with over 300 staff concluded in the SER (p 59) that over 50% respondents either have not completed a formal induction or are unsure whether they have had an induction. The SER highlighted that with half of all consulted staff from Tipperary ETB (previously VEC/FÁS) being employed for over 11 years, this could account for the lack of a recent formalised induction process. However, there was an awareness among teachers that as staffing levels grow and staff commence employment throughout the year, there is a need for induction programmes throughout the year, including recorded programmes that staff can access remotely. The review team is pleased to note that this is now in place.

There is also evidence that audits have taken place. These include checking that everything which is required for recruitment is listed and kept on file. Importantly, there are clear procedures and processes which ensure that vetting of staff and all relevant paperwork is carried out in a cohesive manner at the beginning of staff's teaching career.

The review team finds that Tipperary ETB is clearly committed to expanding as a learning organisation and ensures that all staff have access to professional development opportunities. A FET Continuing Professional Development (CPD) coordinator was assigned to a member of FET SMT in December 2018. This role supports staff to develop their skills, update their practice and knowledge and explore contemporary approaches needed to teach, for example, online and innovative blended delivery, and vitally offers staff the opportunity to network and share best practice with colleagues. The review team further noted that staff are effective in supporting the development of course materials and assessment plans. They are also supported by line managers to participate in CPD, which is general and bespoke, for example, monetary incentives are in place, with professional development for Master level qualifications. However, the review team heard evidence from staff that some teachers paid for their CPD. The review team heard from staff that Tipperary ETB is committed to developing as a learning organisation and ensuring that there is a suite of CPD opportunities for all staff which includes, for example, facilitating staff to update their skills and competencies and explore contemporary pedagogical approaches.

However, it was highlighted there are challenges for part-time staff to attend CPD due to teacher/tutor contract hours and structures, and not being paid to attend CPD events. Furthermore, the review team heard from staff that staff training needs to be further broadened to include meeting the needs of learners with diverse needs, such as in dealing with mental health issues

The review team heard that managers currently operate an informal appraisal system with staff to give feedback. Introducing a formal system is seen by managers as a complex issue, which cannot be resolved by Tipperary ETB alone. The review team ascertained that a systematic performance review system was not in place. The result being that performance reviews were actioned (often meaningfully) through meetings. These meetings allow staff to raise and address any issues they have. A new team has been established in Tipperary ETB which is building capacity and addressing CPD needs of staff. In addition, an external consultant has been appointed to explore team structures and how they can work effectively and systematically to meet the needs of staff and in turn impact on the holistic experience of the learners.

Commendations

- The review team noted that there was strong evidence of committed, strong, dedicated staff that have outstanding problem-solving ability and creativity and are flexible and innovative in their approaches. They put learners at the heart of everything that they do.
- The review team noted that there was robust evidence of dialogic engagement whereby staff felt confident to offer negative as well as positive feedback to the centre managers and other staff across the ETB.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that there is development of a cohesive professional and performance development system for staff.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

Tipperary ETB is a collaborating partner in the development of new programmes. The review team is of the opinion that this collaboration demonstrates internal and external stakeholder consultation and evaluation of new programmes by ETB QA governance and management structures. Indeed, the development of new programmes aligns with ETB strategic objectives which meet awarding body requirements and policies in relation to access, transfer and progression is compliant with regulatory or professional body conditions and inclusive of programme. For example, working in partnership and adhering to professional body conditions, programme development of the Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and Level 5 of the certificate in Early Learning and Care commenced a national ETB-wide governance oversight body. The makeup of this body included the Directors of FET of the 16 ETBs, and an agreement was made that a shareable curriculum in ELC should be

developed for the ETBs and their partner organisations; this programme development initiative was led by Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB and supported by 15 other ETBs. The review team finds there is compliance in place in relation to regulatory or professional body conditions and inclusive programme and periodic programme review.

A proportion of Tipperary's ETB's programmes have been delivered for a number of years. They were developed through collaborative national processes across the sector or through legacy structures which were retained on the establishment of the ETBs. These programmes have been described as 'legacies' which were once suitable for learners and are now deemed to be out of date. However, the review team heard excellent examples of how Tipperary ETB has engaged with awarding bodies who can provide off-the-shelf programmes that are current and meaningful to help mitigate unemployment in and around the Tipperary region, such as the City and Guilds Dry lining course. In addition, there are some good examples of responses to local needs for particular courses. In community education, a need was identified to provide training in effective use of smart phone technology and these literacy courses developed by Tipperary ETB have proved very popular. The Commis Chef apprenticeship course has been modified to address concerns about excessive assessment. In other cases, for example electrical engineering, modifications were often necessary due to changes in regulations. Regarding our ability to monitor and provide appropriate, timely and quality feedback on programmes that are managed by co-ordinating or other providers, this responsiveness to the needs of the learners, employers, social community need is very commendable. In addition, the review team were very pleased to note that an area-based planning model, which responds to the needs of community the ETB serves, is firmly in place which draws on local information to ensure course provision is meaningful and meets the needs of the diverse community. For example, Tipperary ETB has had programme development experience in Childcare and Safety, Child Development and Play and Television and Film Production.

A good example was provided to the review team that demonstrates the commitment of Tipperary ETB to serving their community. The review teams deem it important to include a case study submitted during the main review visit that clearly evidences this:

Adult Literacy and Community Education Programmes in Tipperary Education and Training Board account for between 53% to 65% in the overall instances of learning throughout the years 2017 to 2021 with a total of 23,401 instances of learning. Although an exceptionally large cohort of learner's progress through these programmes, they are often underrepresented through the quality assurance process.

Programmes where these learners participate are either on the non-accredited or levels 1 to 3 and are often the most vulnerable learners accessing adult education services. Programmes include:

- Community Education – working with groups and partners to enhance learning, fostering empowerment and contributing to civic society

- Adult Literacy Scheme – learners with lower levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills including target groups of those who are long term unemployed, those with disabilities and learning difficulties and vulnerable ethnic groups
- Family Learning – working with parents, grandparents, guardians and caregivers to support their children to learn both in school and at home
- ESOL – English Language for speakers of other languages supporting migrants from other countries who have made Ireland their home and also including asylum seekers and emergency asylum resettlement programmes
- Refugee Resettlement Programme – supporting Syrian families who have moved to Tipperary with no English and often with low levels of literacy from their country of origin
- The Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE) programmes provides an intensive tuition opportunity to adults who wish to improve basic skills
- Skills for Work – targeting those in low paid employment with literacy difficulties and often including a large proportion of migrant workers from Eastern European counties

We must ask why the most vulnerable groups often remain underrepresented in dialogue and reporting across our education sections with the value of participation (in community education) and accreditation at levels 1 to 3 somehow not getting equal recognition. Attached here are 3 case studies to illustrate the value of participation at this level.

The recent programmes run that are similar in terms of collaboration and intergenerational learning attached here refer to:

1. Motor Mechanics and Driver Safety programme

I attach the SICAP case study that captures the research done into the Mechanics programme that we successfully ran a number of times in collaboration with North Tipperary Development Company in Newport.

The course had significant outcomes to counter marginalisation and to either keep young people in school, support them in returning to school, assisting them into either further study or employment.

We have now secured and prepared a premises in Roscrea and are starting the same course there in March 2022.

2. family Learning

They ran successful courses for parents of Junior Infants about how to support the literacy and numeracy development of their children during Covid and also distributed packs to many more parents through the HSCLs.

In schools where there was not enough interest to start a group, packs were distributed to parents as well through partnerships with principals and class heads.

- During Covid we did an online 'Grow it Forward' course in Horticulture in partnership with Tipperary Libraries and the 'Grow it Forward' movement in Ireland for parents in North Tipperary.
- During Covid we ran a 'Fairy tales and Folklore' course with parents and children of asylum-seeking families. This was very well-received and was also presented nationally as a NALA webinar: [Family learning: Fairy tales and folklore through an intercultural lens - Bing video](#)

3. Specific Family Learning support

- A need was identified through a Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) for a traveller boy in secondary school with very low literacy and numeracy skills.

A programme was then put in place to support him and his mother (there are 3 other children in primary school in this family) so that they can learn the skills that will support him in school and also support his mother to support him and the other children.

The review team was impressed by the culture of innovation employed by Tipperary ETB which has been notable through the impact of the pandemic on virtual approaches to teaching and learning. The approach was agile and pro-active which was evidenced by the development and implementation, for example, of two new assessment units, at short notice, to meet changing and challenging circumstances. In their innovative and inclusive approach, Tipperary ETB were able to reach groups

through different means; open and working in a collaborative manner, for example, providing the newly developed Commis Chef Apprenticeship, that was developed in compliance with QQI Topic Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for providers of statutory apprenticeship programmes. Indeed, in the Commis Chef programme validation application, Tipperary ETB has provided Kerry ETB with evidence that meets approval criteria in the four key areas which include operational compliance in quality assurance, staff resources, environment and physical resources and assessment on and off-the-job for delivery of the programme.

The team at Tipperary ETB continue to work with colleagues from other ETBs around the country in meaningful ways. In relation to the main review visit, the review team would like the collaboration between ETBs to be further developed, whereby strategic decision making includes a needs analysis which addresses curriculum requirements from a regional and sector level. Additionally, for effective curriculum development, which is a key strength of Tipperary ETB, the review team heard that core roles in the teaching team need to be allocated and resources need to be available in order to meet and be responsive to the needs of industry.

Conversely, in the SER there was also evidence of a lack of further information on the programme development process. Also, whereas Tipperary ETB does not have extensive experience in programme development work, more than half of the staff respondents in the survey would like to become more involved in programme development. The review team heard that key programme design and development staff have been offered the opportunity to attend a relevant certificate course, which supported them to develop programmes in collaborative and contemporary ways, for example hybrid online and in person courses. The review team notes that the SER indicates that a curriculum development structure will be developed. QQI QHub is a new online platform for QQI to interact in a robust manner that effectively supports ETBs with business processes which includes programme development, revalidation, and extension. The review team is of the view that there are opportunities for Tipperary ETB to explore with QQI the possibility of taking on more responsibility within the programme validation process through devolved responsibility.

During the main review visit the review team are impressed by the productive and positive relationships forged between Tipperary ETB and its second providers, which included Community Training Centres (CTC), Contracted training, Local Training Initiatives (LTI) and Specialist Training Providers (STP). This has had the effect that second providers also adopted the Tipperary ETB 'learner centred' pedagogical approach, which was also confirmed by the learners. Importantly, all the providers had review and monitoring meetings at the beginning, or end, of each year. which included course delivery and implementation and was shaped around target setting and review. Second providers felt that Tipperary ETB were open to suggestions for course development and helping to put proposals together and implementing plans.

There is a regional skills infrastructure which facilitates the delivery of learning and training packages across industries. The review team are impressed by Tipperary ETB's workforce development group which included regional managers. The group meet every couple of months. The review team heard that it is a productive group which offers the opportunity to share best practice and data analysis. Indeed, if there are gaps in the training provision they can thus be addressed in a timely and meaningful way and the review team heard that the workforce development group is considered to be very responsive to local needs.

Commendation

- The review team commends the strong, responsive and supportive links to community and external stakeholders.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB's SMT explore, with QQI, the potential to move to devolved responsibility for programme validation, and to consider whether this is positioned individually or nationally.
- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB establish a programme review body to audit current provision and make appropriate suggestions for new development, amendment, or discontinuation of courses.
- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB explore ways to develop new courses/programmes at a national and local level, for example working with other ETBs, within an agreed timeframe.

Access, Transfer and Progression

A key aim of Tipperary ETB is to offer a learning route for all learners. This includes demonstrating a commitment to all learners across the organisation through developing policies and practices that improve access and appropriate course placement.

The responsibility for and management of learner admission is at centre/programme level. In relation to operational Structure Supporting Learner Access, Tipperary ETB FET service has two Adult Guidance Counsellors and the Adult Guidance and Information Service (AGIS) which offers impartial and confidential information and guidance on Education and Training options available within

Tipperary ETB and with other education/training providers. The focus of the service is to actively support applicants to make meaningful choice about returning to education and training whilst also considering any barriers they may face and how these can be addressed.

Furthermore, AGIS relationships with relevant external stakeholder organisations are used to support learner access as well as facilitating FET information and careers events. These external organisations include AONTAS, Citizens Information Services, Family Resource Centres, local FE and HE Institutions, HSE, Jobs Clubs, Local Enterprise Offices, Local Authorities, the local Library network, Local Development Companies, the Technological University of the Shannon and Midwest (TUS) and Community Employment Schemes, Mid-West/South-East Regional Skills Fora, Tipperary PPN (Public Participation Network) and Tipperary Volunteer Centres. The AGIS service also offers and utilises web tools such as CareersPortal My Future+ with learners needing this support.

Tipperary ETB's self-evaluation report notes a cross-functional team work collaboratively in progressing access and information services for Tipperary ETB learners which includes the production of the annual course brochure, consistent ongoing social media presence including live and interactive online events, the establishment of a generic email address for enquiries.

The review team finds that Tipperary ETB have strong and productive links with Higher Education and have developed an outstanding relationship with Technological University of the Shannon (TUS). This relationship serves the community of Tipperary and beyond. There is a vision and plan for a Clonmel FET college in a shared, connected campus, to facilitate both FE and HE in the same space. There is evidence of a deep relationship between Tipperary ETB and TUS at various levels. The partnership has provided an exciting opportunity for ambition and innovation. Staff highlighted additional common initiatives between Tipperary ETB and HEI to stimulate access, progression and exit routes of learners to HE and beyond. The review team are pleased to note that there is strong ambition with the connected campus, with learners at the heart of the drive.

The review team are pleased to note that information about courses and guidance are widely available, both at Tipperary ETB and centre level. Learners are offered the opportunity to register in various ways. Websites such as the Further Education Training Courses Hub (FETCHcourses.ie) and Generation Apprenticeship (apprenticeship.ie) work well in publicising the courses more widely. However, the high quality of the courses also has impact on communication with a third of learner respondents in the SER stating they heard about Tipperary ETB by word of mouth and friends. Learners apply, in the main, through the Further Education Training Courses Hub and contacting the Tipperary ETB's office. Tipperary ETB also offer upskilling courses through employers. Looking to the future, a new access, transfer and progression policy and aligning procedure are expected to further develop its function. In addition, a review will be conducted of the current relationship between AGIS and recruitment. The findings can then be analysed to enable a road map is put into place to ensure robust recruitment of learners.

The review team noted that the learner handbook is described by staff and learners as an important tool for learner support. However, the survey for the SER indicates that just over 50% of learners say they have received it. This is considered an area with significant room for improvement. The overwhelming evidence from the learners spoken to during the main review visit was that it is an 'essential' booklet that helped them navigate through the programme and offered them key information. However, this was not the experience of all learners interviewed during the main review visit and the use, and understanding, of the learner handbook appears inconsistent across different programmes and centres.

The review team heard from learners that the reasons they complete courses and programmes are a combination of wanting to learn something new and social expectations. Tipperary ETB has appointed a dedicated Active Inclusion role and a new strategy will be developed and implemented by the end of 2021.

This enthusiasm, dedication and drive of the role has led the review team to ascertain that it has the potential to ensure a wide range of learners are recruited, including those from marginalised communities, and support their trajectory.

Commendation

- The review team commends that there are widely available information sources and strong systems to support learners in finding the right course at Tipperary ETB and future pathways.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB ensure that records are kept of Learner Handbooks/Assessment handbooks (where appropriate) being issued to students to ensure consistency across all centres/programme areas. The handbook should be accessible to all levels to promote readability and context.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

The review team finds there is evidence that standardisation of assessment across the board is systematically in place. The team heard that modules were updated and checked on a regular basis. An annual review of certification reports is completed by the QA office and support service is provided for quality assurance. However, it was also noted that "Whilst the review and updating of assessment instruments by QQI assessors is being encouraged in order to avoid repeated assessments in use, the extent and depth to which this takes place following feedback from the authentication process is unknown". Indeed, legacy assessment specifications continue to be used and can potentially act as a

barrier; to address a move to “a more centralised-approach to EA per award (as opposed to centre-based EA approach) could offer more standardisation and consistency of EA experience, feedback and reporting.”

The review team heard that feedback relating to integrity and learner results appears to be positive from staff and that feedback loops are maintained.

The review team ascertained that the 4 legacy QA systems resulted in commonalities and there was an approach to combine the transitional quality systems. There are different approaches in managing assessment relating to locally managed by the module assessor, or, managed centrally by the ETB and this has been a challenge in relation to consistency. However, there has been meaningful innovation which highlighted a hybrid approach which took elements of both, the aim being to unite different approaches and roll out a mixed model as a priority. In order for this to effectively take place reskilling and upskilling of staff is needed. This will present a challenge in relation to resources, data management and staff training.

The review team noted the importance of the website, SharePoint, and staff meetings for accessing and communicating key information changes and updates. The team heard that modules were updated and checked on a regular basis. There was also communication from coordinators who inform secondary providers of changes and offer a community of practice, for example they work in a collaborative manner and share best practice in a safe environment where all the team feel supported and valued, and questions and queries can be addressed in a timely and empowering manner. To ensure a cohesive approach, there are dissemination updates and changes every six weeks. The need for pro-active and regular communication was essential during the pandemic due to there being many, very rapid changes required.

The review team noted also that the majority of courses do not have textbooks. Instead, teaching staff produce briefing material and exams. This can be very time consuming. However, the teaching staff noted in one session that ‘it is good that we have very detailed guidelines and marksheets, we are flexible, constantly updating.’

The review team noted that the harmonisation of quality assurance processes across centres within Tipperary ETB is enacted in different ways. However, EA exam verification and the results approval panel (RAP) is consistent across all centres, as is programme approval. The review team also noted with pleasure that evidence gathered during the main review visit indicates there is support for internal validation, external authentication and the results approval process are present, and feedback from staff is taken into consideration, there is commitment from staff to ensure learner results are accurate and practitioners seem to be happy with supports available to them, especially SharePoint.

Information and Data Management

Tipperary ETB uses a range of data management systems to store and manage data and perform administrative and operational functions.

The Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) is the national integrated management information system (MIS), which also includes the National Course Calendar, the National Programme Database and the PLSS Reports Module. It is integrated with the FETCH and the Funding Allocation Request and Reporting (FARR) systems. It was introduced in 2016 and provides a robust and comprehensive learner information system for all FET provision that is user friendly, efficient and effective, and enables reporting, data analysis and planning.

However, although PLSS has transformed the organisational experience for capturing the learner journey information and reporting, it does not capture all the data measurements for FET. For example, apprenticeship learner data in the Apprenticeship Client Services System (ACSS).

The SER states that 'Tipperary ETB has a unit dedicated to corporate governance which includes responsibility for oversight of data protection, freedom of information and risk management. A Data Protection Officer is appointed within Tipperary ETB with responsibility for Data Protection.' The review team finds this is a good addition to the unit dedicated to corporate governance.

Importantly, it was also highlighted that staff were offered awareness training and this was supported in ETB's self-evaluation, 'Tipperary ETB compliance pre-requisite for staff access to PLSS is that GDPR awareness training is completed'. There is evidence of a high awareness by staff of their professional obligations in relation to General Data Protection Regulation.

Other information and data management systems cover areas such as financial management and payroll, City and Guilds Walled Garden, Apprenticeship Client Services System (ACSS) and SharePoint/Office 365.

A FET Management Information Systems Administrator was appointed in late 2020 with a brief to develop and implement a Management Information Policy. It was recognised by the review team that that this is a complex area, and that development is still in the early stages.

Concerns were raised by staff in the main review visit that IT support was under-resourced given the increasing demands for digital provision of programmes. There appears to be inconsistencies in support across centres leading to local difficulties when problems arise.

The evidence from the main review visit and the SER indicates that arrangements to ensure data are reliable and secure are strong with robust processes and procedures in place. However, it was noted that there was a need for Tipperary ETB to be more agile in using data to feed into quality system to inform strategic decisions and policy forming. It was also accepted that there was need for more qualitative data to capture the learner voice and experience. While there is evidence of good practice

at centre-level, this is not consistent, and the review team did not see evidence of a systematic approach at ETB-level to capturing the learner voice or managing and analysing their data.

Commendation

- The review team commends the development of a Management Information Systems policy and associated procedures to inform strategic analysis, programme/ centre level planning and decision-making.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends the use of more analysis of both quantitative data e.g., destination data, and qualitative data to monitor and measure Quality Assurance.
- The review team recommends the development of systematic feedback needed to provide a stronger platform for the learner voice.

Public Information and Communication

The review team finds that Tipperary ETB is cognisant of the importance of organisational visibility for all stakeholders and is committed to publishing and communicating accurate information on all structures, services and supports. Tipperary ETB has a website, www.tipperary.etb.ie, and this is the principal platform used to share information about FET, youth work, schools, governance structures, human resource information, procurement, GDPR, music generation etc., including the provisions of access to all key publications, policies and procedures, quality assurance evaluations and findings.

Quality assurance has a dedicated page within the Tipperary ETB website providing information on each of the 11 QQI Core QA areas. Included in this section are QA staff contact information, governance and management structures including terms of reference, legacy QA agreements, policies, procedures, forms, validated programmes and teaching, learning and assessment information. Fetchcourses.ie, course finder and online application websites are integrated with PLSS. Information is also provided to the public in the form of an annual brochure, print media such as newspaper, leaflets, flyers, radio advertising and promotional videos. The FET section of the Tipperary ETB website provides information to the public on the Adult Guidance and Information Service.

The self-evaluation and monitoring reports and publications for Tipperary ETB, including the 2018 executive self-evaluation report, yearly quality improvement plans (QIPs) and QIP progress reports

are published in a timely manner and in an easily accessible format. Examples of learner feedback and testimonials are also showcased in this location.

The review team ascertained during the main review visit, that learners generally heard of courses through word of mouth or via websites where they found information easy to find. Information was also clearly located on the ETB website. During the main review visit, learners were asked whether the course was what they expected based on the information they received pre-admission. The evidence indicates that it was. One learner responded that 'as I live in Kerry, so I travelled through and found the course in Thurles had more content, so I am delighted with it. What was advertised was in the course, very informative and well-advertised'.

The review team heard that communications from Tipperary ETB and relationships with employers and regional skills are organised using Email Information, a productive, regular and informative communication link throughout the pandemic. Indeed, a very good relationship has been established over the past 4 years. It was also very good to note that there is a workforce development group including regional managers which meet every couple of months to ensure effective communication channels are continued and that matters arising can be addressed in a timely and meaningful manner.

Commendation

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB for the ongoing development of its presence on multiple digital platforms and continuing to grow their external engagement.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Learning Environment

Tipperary's ETB's self-evaluation report describes the available facilities and centres. The review team's main review visit was virtual and therefore the team was unable to comment on the ETB's physical learning environment. However, the feedback from staff and learners indicated that Tipperary ETB is committed to creating within each teaching and learning context, either in centre, outreach or in collaboration with other providers/organisations, a learning environment which, in its physical, social, cultural and intellectual aspects, facilitate learners a holistic learning experience which enables them to flourish both personally and academically. The SER reported that 89% of respondents agreed that their learning environment contributed positively to their ability to learn. The SER states that 'ICT digital resources to learners were enhanced through the roll out of an ICT Grant

for Disadvantaged Students (renamed the Technology Equity Scheme in Tipperary ETB) during the Covid pandemic.’ This has offered a more equitable approach to digital access.

The review team notes that there is the ongoing development and review of Tipperary ETB’s entire building infrastructure, assessing the effectiveness of premises, equipment and facilities to ensure they are fit-for-purpose in relation to the programmes of education and training, research and related services. The SER states that “In 2020, there were additional SOLAS capital building projects and renovations undertaken; in Youthreach Centre Cappawhite, Cahir, Killenaule, Clonmel and Carrick on Suir FET Centres and Thurles, Nenagh and Clonmel CTCs”. Staff feedback does not seem to match SER claims over capital investment, particularly in IT provision and resources. The review heard of varying levels of standards, with poor quality in some classrooms and buildings, while also hearing of excellent quality in others.

The review team notes the significant, and pro-active progress which has led to the development of a positive virtual learning environment. This includes sustained support for staff to develop knowledge and skills in using the online platform. There is a clear commitment from staff to integrating subject knowledge and skills and the related language, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across Tipperary ETB’s FET provision. The SER states that ‘A Tipperary ETB working group was set up in 2018 to progress this model of integrated core skills support as per the Integrating Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (ETBI). Adult Literacy Organisers offer a range of core skill supports across FET to learners, which include special education needs, English language, ESOL, skills for work, family learning, core literacies etc., integrated into mainstream services, for example, BTEI, Templemore PLC, and Apprenticeship programmes.

Commendation

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB for their proactive and meaningful response in mitigating the impact on learners of the public health restrictions associated with Covid-19.

Assessment of Learners

The review team finds that Tipperary ETB has good communication with its learners and has provided them with relevant information on their assessment procedures. Tipperary ETB has created a survey in the form of a template document established in relation to the review of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in FET, to capture learning from Covid-19 mitigation processes. The SER notes that ‘Overall, learner feedback of blended learning methodologies, and online teaching and learning during Covid-19, has been positive.’ During the main review visit the review team is pleased to note that this positivity aligned with learner feedback. Learners confirmed to the review team that they are made aware of what they need to complete their assignments. There is evidence of support for learners with different needs. For example, dyslexic supports, deaf supports, adult literacy etc. Learners receive

regular feedback on their progress during their course. Learners voiced to the review team how 'Assessment frightens the life out of the people'. However, the receiving of clear and accessible briefs which are 'broken down' to facilitate engagement and understanding which allays fears and supports learners' progress. The learners also confirmed there was clear and consistent communication between the tutors and themselves. For example, they were informed and guided through assessment briefs the week before and again on the morning of the assessment. They stated, 'the tutor will go through it again, we feel never under pressure, always it is made calm and relaxed'.

The process of internal verification, external validation and results approval is described in detail in the ETB's self-evaluation report and the review team considers it a major step forward. However, secure data storage is not in place everywhere in the ETB and this will need to be addressed to facilitate consistency and rigour. Learners communicated to the review team that they feel well informed and importantly, they consider tutor feedback helpful, and supports their development and trajectory. The assessment and reporting templates have reduced errors, but it appears to the review team that the challenge is to maintain the balance with local centre autonomy. The use of an experienced external authenticator (EA) worked well in this respect.

The quality assurance of assessment includes procedures around assessment which the review team find to be clear and robust and understood by staff. The review team consider the quality assurance officer to be a key strategic staff member and crucial to ensuring consistency and high standards. The process appears to be unambiguous and clearly formalised. At central level in the ETB there are clear guidelines for QQI awards, but it is not consistent across all provision across the ETB.

During the main review visit, staff communicated to the review team that standardisation of assessment is a challenge. A reason given was that the majority of courses do not have textbooks and as a result teaching staff create the course overview, content and examinations which can be very time consuming. However, teaching staff noted that it is good that they have very detailed guidelines and marksheets. The approach taken is flexible and leads to effective and regular updating. The review team is impressed that the pandemic, and the obstacles it had the potential to cause, was met by a very responsive and creative approach that is to be commended. During the main review visit, the learning practitioners confirmed that 'it made us think outside the box, creatively'. They were able to be learner-centred and interpret guidelines according to the learners' levels. The review team notes that there is a system/process that ensures the consistency of quality before the learner receives certification.

The review team heard that a formal Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy is in progress. The team is of the opinion that even without a formal policy, presently, when supporting learners to choose a suitable course, their prior learning experience is taken into account. The SER identifies that within Evening Training provision, there is the opportunity to self-refer in cases where the applicant has no qualifications for Level 5 entry. In addition, recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland is supported through the National Academic Recognition information Centre (NARIC) Ireland with Tipperary ETB FET Guidance Service also providing information supports and advice to learners who need and aim

to pursue the path of qualification recognition. All learners that the review team met with were apparently aware of the assessment process and appeals procedure. However, there was an inconsistency with the issuing of handbooks and how assessments were presented across programmes. Apprentices were provided with an assessment handbook; trainees did not have a handbook, but they were provided with documentation which laid out the assessment procedures and they communicated satisfaction with the information provided.

The review team were impressed to see that the business plan submitted by second providers included an assessment plan. They noted that the quality assurance within the ETB included a process of certification audits. The QA also includes visits to centres and checking learner portfolios.

Tipperary ETB had already embedded the induction of mentoring staff and tutors practice and the review team finds that it is beneficial. Indeed, the induction allows staff to explore and become familiar with module descriptors as a guideline, the IV and EA processes together with other relevant processes and procedures. The review team noted that Learning Practitioners were aware of the importance of standardisation in relation to the impact on benefitting learners and vitally assuring and sustaining quality. Learning practitioners are also involved in developing an ETB-wide assessment approach which includes exploring and implementing the most meaningful approaches to assessment. They voiced that the learner record does not seem very useful and that what was needed to move forward is a more blended approach to the assessment process review. Importantly, due to open and honest communication learning practitioners can suggest ways to approach assessment differently if required.

Commendation

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB on its comprehensive monitoring and review of assessment through the internal verification and external authentication processes.

Supports for Learners

The ETB's self-evaluation report notes "Learner supports in Tipperary ETB range from psychological, advocacy, wellbeing, guidance, information to literacy and numeracy, ICT facilities and equipment as well as financial and a sense of belonging and connectedness". The review team finds that counselling supports are embedded in a small number of FET programmes but not the majority. For example, Youthreach and Community Training Centres (CTCs) are supported with approximately 10 counsellor hours per week, in addition to working closely with the Drug Addiction Counselling Services of the HSE. The 'Making Connections' Local Training Initiative (LTI) receives funding for supervision under the Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service (WSTCYS). Learners enrolled on other specified programmes also have access to an advocate, providing information on career development, supporting transfer and progression, engaging with parents, and

liaising with employers facilitating work placement. Online text support service was available to learners, eligible Tipperary ETB programmes also offer onsite childcare and transport support. However, it was highlighted in the SER that transportation to FET centres has been an issue for many learners in the Tipperary region and this is addressed by providing information to learners on travel options as well as engaging local bus companies, where budget permits, to transport the learners in some instances. In relation to childcare for eligible Tipperary ETB programmes, learners can access Childcare assistance through the National Childcare Scheme (NCS). A number of Programmes/Centres also have onsite community childcare services which learners can access for their children. For example, Templemore College of Further Education and Local Training Initiatives in Tipperary Town and Cashel.

Overall, the review team is of the opinion that there is a wide range of supports available. The review team were pleased to note that Tipperary ETB take feedback into consideration and identify any supports that may be lacking and implement a strategy and/or resource to move forward and address any voids. There is also support for learners with different and diverse needs, for example dyslexia and visual impairment, that have been identified. In addition, there has been technical support throughout the pandemic and the review team is pleased to note that this continues post pandemic. The ETB's self-evaluation report notes that in surveys, only a small % seem to be dissatisfied with learner supports which is a good indicator of the right supports being provided. However, supports are not available to everyone. The review heard that staff members are working with learner supports to discuss strategies and develop practices to seek solutions to address this.

The review team were also pleased to note that learners were aware of existing support; at local levels, through interpersonal relationships and induction where the learners are made aware of available services which include guidance at local level.

The review team heard that there is a history within Tipperary ETB of supporting diverse groups. This is facilitated through working closely with community education, e.g., women's group with knitting, art groups, CV prep etc. Cooperation with library services is also an excellent strategy to meet the needs of foreign nationals and in doing so facilitate their integration into society. In addition, language supports for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners partaking in higher level awards is available and accredited through Cambridge exams. The review team was impressed how Tipperary ETB was reaching out to often marginalised groups and supporting their progression and integration.

Commendations

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB on their holistic and dialogic learner-centred approach.

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB on their committed, strong and dedicated staff who have outstanding problem-solving ability, creativity, flexibility and innovation in their approaches.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends Tipperary ETB review its staffing and infrastructure to enhance learner support to be more equitable to all learners across all centres.
- The review team recommends ensuring IT support is available at centres to ensure digital and enhanced learning can be equitably accessed across all Tipperary ETB courses and geographical locations.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Self-evaluation Monitoring and Review

The review team is of the opinion that the Tipperary ETB is committed to the quality assurance of its programmes and services through different mechanisms of self-evaluation and monitoring throughout the year. To support this Tipperary ETB completed a comprehensive self-evaluation report. This was overseen by a Self-Evaluation Steering Group (SESG). The review team notes that it focused on the quality of the learners' experiences and achievements, and that the ETB engaged with a variety of internal and external stakeholders and used a varied methodology including focus groups, despite the challenge of carrying this out during the pandemic. Staff met by the review team found the information gathered in face-to-face sessions to be particularly useful. The SER was effective in its review and evaluation of its quality assurance system and included conclusions which highlighted actions and improvements needed. The review team felt this would be further enhanced by including timescales for completing the work required and identifying who will be responsible. The review team noted that some actions completed for the SER could be introduced as an integral part of the Quality Assurance system.

The Quality Assurance of further education and training (FET) in Tipperary ETB is monitored and reviewed in a number of ways. Following completion of an Executive Self-Evaluation (ESE) process with QQI in 2018, an annual system of preparing a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and a progress report was implemented in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Tipperary ETB supports internal monitoring through review of data drawn from the PLSS system relating to learner starts, completion and progression to further/higher education or employment and certification rates. Staff met by the review team discussed their involvement in both providing data and utilising data at local level to improve provision of courses.

Tipperary ETB collects feedback from learners using formal and informal mechanisms to review their experiences within FET in Tipperary ETB. The review team learned that learner feedback regarding their satisfaction with their course is collected in a variety of informal and formal ways at local level. Learners met by the review team confirmed they had been asked for feedback, mostly at the end of their course and sometimes mid-way through, often by completion of a feedback form. The review team notes that this feedback is collected and used locally. This is an important element of the learners' voice and does not feed into the QA governance groups.

Tipperary ETB also reviews reports emerging from the internal verification and external authentication of assessment processes, and implements subsequent recommendations and actions required. The ETB also maintains and monitors a feedback and change request log of feedback on QA procedures.

Commendation

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB on its SER, including the focus on the quality of the learners' experiences, its use of a varied methodology including focus groups, and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. In particular, the review team commends the honest and open critical and reflective nature of the report.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB reviews and prioritise Quality Improvements required over the next 3 years, detailing how and when the ETB will address the actions needed, and who will have responsibility. This process could be supported through the further development of Annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and half-yearly progress reports.
- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB develop a policy and procedures to formalise collection and review of learner feedback on their courses to feed into the quality assurance system and strengthen the learners' voice in some governance groups.

Programme Monitoring and Review

The Tipperary ETB Quality Assurance Governance Group has established a Programme Approval Committee (PAC) as part of its governance structure. This committee has decision-making and approval functions on programme proposals including development of new modules, programmes or awards, approving requests by centres to access existing validated programmes and programmes currently not validated by Tipperary ETB, addition of modules to validated programmes and amendments to existing validated programmes.

The review team noted that programme monitoring and review takes place at centre level and is the responsibility of the programme coordinator and the centre manager. It takes account of learner, staff and stakeholder feedback, recommendations from the internal verification and external authentication process, reports from Results Approval Panels (RAPs), learner complaints and appeals and course completion rates. This feedback is used to inform changes to programmes and local procedures, which are approved by the appropriate QA governance group, and to inform professional needs for staff. This approach enables change at local level. The review team became aware during the main review visit that a substantial number of Tipperary ETB's programmes were reviewed and developed more than ten years ago.

The review team observed that there are no policies and procedures in place for programme monitoring and review at ETB level. The review team was informed that Tipperary ETB plans to

develop and implement a programme review process at centre and ETB level. The review team acknowledges that this should provide for a more robust, coherent and systematic approach to monitoring and review and could facilitate coordinated reports and data to give more oversight on programme monitoring and review to the governance groups. The ETB also intends to establish a Curriculum Development structure to support it to review and develop programmes.

Commendation

- The review team commends the ETB for the establishment of a Programme Approval Committee (PAC).

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETBs develops and implements a programme review process to provide for a more robust, coherent and systematic approach to monitoring and review.
- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB develops its capacity to review and develop programmes.
- The review team recommends that any Curriculum Development body established to look at ETB provision should include, as a priority, the need to review legacy programmes which may now not be relevant or meet current industry or sector requirements.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

The review team finds that Tipperary ETB has a meaningful and extensive network of relationships with other bodies and organisations in the region and seeks to ensure these are maintained and developed. Indeed, the ETB engages with a range of external parties, including, second providers, external stakeholders, the community sector, government departments, other ETBs, Higher Education (HE), local authorities and partnerships, employers and industry representatives (SER p152). Tipperary ETB also maintains close links with national stakeholders including SOLAS, QQI and other certifying and regulatory bodies.

During the main review visit, the review team was able to link up with representatives from a number of these parties, stakeholders and providers. Tipperary ETB maintains Service Level Agreements

(SLA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with local community and voluntary organisations across County Tipperary.

The review team is of the opinion that training provision outsourced to contractors by Tipperary ETB is a flexible and innovative approach to delivering training, is procured and managed in line with Irish and European law and follows guidelines as set down by the funding authorities.

Under the current Multi-Supplier Contracted Training Framework, Tipperary ETB has four contractors and under the Traineeship Framework, six contractors. Framework contracts are in place with each contracted trainer and services contract in place for each course, outlining that contractors must meet the Quality Assurance guidelines detailed in the Core and Sector Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for ETBs issued by QQI.

Tipperary ETB monitors their contractors by conducting bi-monthly review meetings to discuss local needs, contractor/sub-contractor performance, areas of improvement, course/employment outcomes, innovation and issue resolution.

During the main review visit, the review team heard acknowledgement that relationships with external parties which contribute to education and training, either delivered directly by the ETB or through other organisations on its behalf, was paramount to learners having a positive experience, learner training and development and progression. The challenge for Tipperary ETB is to ensure that learner experiences are consistent across the programmes provided directly or indirectly by the providers for the ETB.

The setting up of the workforce development team allows Tipperary ETB to continually review and improve their planning to meet industry needs and increase engagement and collaboration which is a very positive step in the right direction. The ETB's self-evaluation report noted that Tipperary ETB has delivered Step up and Grow which is a Company Benchmarking process aimed at promoting business excellence.

There was also evidence of programme review and monitoring in vocational courses such as Electrical and Commis Chef apprenticeships, where feedback from employers and students have enabled changes to programmes to ensure that these programmes are relevant and meet industry need.

The ETB's self-evaluation report highlighted that in relation to work experience or work practice, Tipperary ETB is committed to ensuring that the work-based learning environments that learners experience as part of their work placements are appropriate, safe, and not exploitative of the learners that engage in them.

The results of the employer's survey for the SER identified a need to continue and improve employer engagement and workforce development support.

The review team, during the main review visit heard examples of some of the efforts undertaken to strengthen and enhance the links between Tipperary ETB and employers and other external stakeholders.

- Tipperary ETB is working collaboratively with other ETBs e.g., Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, on a company benchmarking program.
- Disseminating information on behalf of employers in relation to their job vacancies.
- Identifying training needs and helping to establish the Tipperary Food Producers Network.
- Ensuring course content to include multimedia and search engine optimisation, to help small companies design their own material for social media.
- Having breakfast meetings, open days, and giving tours of ETB facilities.

In many cases, developments have already been identified by Tipperary ETB itself, demonstrating its capacity for reflective self-analysis.

The review team received very positive feedback from a number of different learners in relation to the training received from the different providers. There was acknowledgement of the help and support received which was very much focused on learner experience, retention, progression and outcomes.

The review team noted and welcomed Tipperary ETB's plans in regard to the oversight and monitoring of Tipperary ETB's Community Education Partners, as the review team heard that clarity on the existing SLAs/MoUs is needed and a framework for future monitoring should be considered.

Commendation

- The review team commends Tipperary ETB on developing contractual arrangements with second providers to enable them to deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners at a local level.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB strengthen its engagement with employers by formalising or systemising the existing engagement activities carried out by its Workforce Development team.
- The review team recommends the implementation of the contracted training framework to further enhance the specific skills training and traineeships in FET.

Section

4

Conclusions



Section 4: Conclusions

4.1 Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

The Tipperary ETB self-evaluation report (SER) and associated documentation was detailed, robust and provided a lens for deep analysis. They were collated through consultation of FET structures and provision in the context of governance and management of quality, teaching learning and assessment, and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. Tipperary ETB exposed a number of key strengths across the organisation, which was underpinned by the learner being at the heart of all that they do. There was clear and sustained evidence of high levels of commitment and engagement with and from learners, staff and stakeholders in the consultation and in the review, the existence of robust structures and processes regarding governance, integrity and approval of learner results and assessment are clearly in place. The review team agree that a priority for the ETB is the integration of the legacy quality assurance systems in Tipperary ETB to create a single comprehensive, robust and responsive QA system.

4.2 Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The review team strongly feels that the pedagogical planning, implementation and evaluation in Tipperary ETB placed the learner at the heart of the process and had a learner centred approach that is to be commended. Tipperary ETB creates a real sense of belonging and care for the community and the learners from those communities; from psychological, advocacy, wellbeing, guidance, information to literacy and numeracy, ICT facilities and equipment as well as financial. There was clear mechanisms and processes in place that positively support the assessment process in Tipperary ETB.

The review team is of the opinion that there needs to be a move towards developing regular and consistent learner feedback to feed into the quality assurance system. In addition, the support structures for learners when accessible are excellent; this excellence needs to be accessible consistently across all centres.

4.3 Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The review team felt that the self-evaluation report completed by Tipperary ETB involved a range of stakeholders, was effective in its review and evaluation of its quality assurance system and included conclusions which highlighted actions and improvements needed. Tipperary ETB supports internal monitoring through review of data, reports, feedback from learners, internal verification and external authentication. Recommendations are made by the review team to support delivering on priority areas and to strengthen the learners' voice.

A governance structure is established for the governance and management of quality assurance and enhancement which will support the ETB to implement the review team's recommendations to develop both a process and capacity for programme development.

The review team notes the strength of external relationships developed by Tipperary ETB and the processes in place to monitor and review them. Recommendations from the team should support the ETB to enhance this area of their Quality Assurance system.

4.4 Commendations

1. The review team recognises that Tipperary ETB are strongly aware of their areas of strengths and development as made explicit in the SER.
2. The review team commends Tipperary ETB for the establishment of its governance groups, and the ongoing review and evolution of the Terms of Reference to ensure the quality assurance of its provision.
3. The review team commends the publication and introduction of an integrated set of quality assurance procedures in the area of assessment which are being used by staff and learners.
4. The review team noted that centres, staff and second providers are well informed about the QA assessment procedures and policies.
5. The review team noted that there was strong evidence of committed, strong, dedicated staff that have outstanding problem-solving ability and creativity and are flexible and innovative in their approaches. They put learners at the heart of everything that they do.
6. The review team noted that there was robust evidence of dialogic engagement whereby staff felt confident to offer negative as well as positive feedback to the centre managers and other staff across the ETB.
7. The review team commends the strong, responsive and supportive links to community and external stakeholders.

8. The review team commends that there are widely available information sources and strong systems to support learners in finding the right course at Tipperary ETB and future pathways.
9. The review team commends the development of a Management Information Systems policy and associated procedures to inform strategic analysis, programme/ centre level planning and decision-making.
10. The review team commends Tipperary ETB for the ongoing development of its presence on multiple digital platforms and continuing to grow their external engagement.
11. The review team commends Tipperary ETB for their proactive and meaningful response in mitigating the impact on learners of the public health restrictions associated with Covid-19.
12. The review team commends Tipperary ETB on its comprehensive monitoring and review of assessment through the internal verification and external authentication processes.
13. The review team commends Tipperary ETB on their holistic and dialogic learner-centred approach.
14. The review team commends Tipperary ETB on their committed, strong and dedicated staff who have outstanding problem-solving ability, creativity, flexibility and innovation in their approaches.
15. The review team commends Tipperary ETB on its SER, including the focus on the quality of the learners' experiences, its use of a varied methodology including focus groups, and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. In particular, the review team commends the honest and open critical and reflective nature of the report.
16. The review team commends the ETB for the establishment of a Programme Approval Committee (PAC).
17. The review team commends Tipperary ETB on developing contractual arrangements with second providers to enable them to deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners at a local level.

4.5 Recommendations

1. The review team recommends Tipperary ETB seek to develop an internal communications mechanism to increase opportunities for staff to engage in review, consultation and planning.
2. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB terms of reference for Quality Assurance Governance be reviewed to consider changing structure to broaden representation and include appropriate internal and external stakeholders.

3. The review team recommends that an integrated QA system is implemented within the proposed timeframe of 2025, if not earlier. The website should also be updated to include integrated procedures as work progresses. The review team recommends that one Quality Assurance system which ensures a robust set of documented policies and procedures are in place across all provision, services and other related activities is implemented as soon as possible. In the meantime, the team recommends that any potential disparities between the different legacy agreements are monitored effectively.
4. The review team also recommends that procedures to cover the governance of training contracted under the contracted providers own QA arrangements are developed as soon as possible.
5. The review team recommends that there is development of a cohesive professional and performance development system for staff.
6. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB's SMT explore, with QQI, the potential to move to devolved responsibility for programme validation, and to consider whether this is positioned individually or nationally.
7. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB establish a programme review body to audit current provision and make appropriate suggestions for new development, amendment, or discontinuation of courses.
8. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB explore ways to develop new courses/programmes at a national and local level, for example working with other ETBs, within an agreed timeframe.
9. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB ensure that records are kept of Learner Handbooks/Assessment handbooks (where appropriate) being issued to students to ensure consistency across all centres/programme areas. The handbook should be accessible to all levels to promote readability and context.
10. The review team recommends the use of more analysis of both quantitative data e.g., destination data, and qualitative data to monitor and measure Quality Assurance.
11. The review team recommends the development of systematic feedback needed to provide a stronger platform for the learner voice.
12. The review team recommends Tipperary ETB review its staffing and infrastructure to enhance learner support to be more equitable to all learners across all centres.
13. The review team recommends ensuring IT support is available at centres to ensure digital and enhanced learning can be equitably accessed across all Tipperary ETB courses and geographical locations.

14. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB reviews and prioritise Quality Improvements required over the next 3 years, detailing how and when the ETB will address the actions needed, and who will have responsibility. This process could be supported through the further development of Annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and half-yearly progress reports.
15. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB develop a policy and procedures to formalise collection and review of learner feedback on their courses to feed into the quality assurance system and strengthen the learners' voice in some governance groups.
16. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETBs develops and implements a programme review process to provide for a more robust, coherent and systematic approach to monitoring and review.
17. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB develops its capacity to review and develop programmes.
18. The review team recommends that any Curriculum Development body established to look at ETB provision should include, as a priority, the need to review legacy programmes which may now not be relevant or meet current industry or sector requirements.
19. The review team recommends that Tipperary ETB strengthen its engagement with employers by formalising or systemising the existing engagement activities carried out by its Workforce Development team.
20. The review team recommends the implementation of the contracted training framework to further enhance the specific skills training and traineeships in FET.

4.6 Statements on Quality Assurance

The review team considers Tipperary ETB's quality assurance procedures, processes and implementation to align and adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and Policies and that they are highly effective. The review team recognises the considerable success that has been achieved in gathering and reporting on the qualitative and quantitative data.

There is clear and timely communication on QA assessment procedures across centres, staff and second providers.

Tipperary ETB clearly demonstrates internal and external stakeholder consultation and evaluation of new programmes by the ETB QA governance and management structures. Indeed, the development of new programmes aligns with ETB strategic objectives which meet awarding body requirements and policies in relation to access, transfer and progression. Compliancy is clearly in place in relation to regulatory or professional body conditions and inclusive programme and periodic programme review.

Tipperary ETB offers a learning route for all learners. This includes demonstrating a commitment to all learners across the organisation by developing policies and practices that improve access and appropriate course placement and align to QQI's policy restatement.

Section

5



ETB Review Response

Section 5: ETB Review Response

Tipperary ETB response to Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance Report



Tipperary ETB welcomes the report of the QQI appointed independent review team on the inaugural institutional review of quality assurance held in February 2022. Despite the constraints required due to COVID-19 with the entire review week schedule conducted remotely, Tipperary ETB was very pleased with the engagement of participants, including staff, learners and stakeholders and the open, positive and professional manner with which the review was conducted, chaired and facilitated by the Review Team with the support of QQI. The whole experience for Tipperary ETB was extremely positive, constructive and reflective.

The Tipperary ETB self-evaluation process was a critical reflection and analysis, through consultation, of our FET structures and provision in the context of governance and management of quality, teaching learning and assessment, and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. The contributions from across the ETB have been instrumental in informing the self-evaluation report and particularly the resulting recommendations and actions. It has been a reflective process, a celebration and recognition of what is being done well and a driver for change in areas requiring improvement and action. The self-evaluation journey, including the inaugural review week and culminating in the review team report, has further strengthened collaboration within Tipperary ETB and externally with stakeholders. The process gave a framework and structure for communication, learner voice, feedback, self-reflection and development to name a few.

Tipperary ETB acknowledges, accepts and appreciates the commendations and recommendations named in the report, which will provide a platform for future development, progression and enhancement activity in the ETB.

The review report identifies 17 commendations, ranging from governance, assessment, communication, dedicated staff to learner centred and links to the community. In Tipperary ETB, as the review team recognised, learners are the heart of all that we do, including the recent efforts made to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the Learner's journey further demonstrating our learner centred approach. It is also very welcome that the review report acknowledged and recognised the committed, strong and dedicated staff in Tipperary ETB, as this was repeatedly echoed by the review team during the review week and is further strengthened in the commendations, giving Tipperary ETB staff the deserved recognition and motivation. The robust self-evaluation process, including honest

dialogue further demonstrated the embedding of a quality assurance culture in Tipperary ETB, where not only does the learner's voice matter but so does the voice of staff and external stakeholders, there is an opportunity for all participants to inform the quality agenda in Tipperary ETB. The strong links to community and external stakeholders were acknowledged in the commendations by the review panel, evident in the breadth of engagement and provision across the county, including community education programmes, outreach, employer engagement, collaborative programme development and so on.

In response to the 20 recommendations identified by the review panel documented in the review report, Tipperary ETB welcomes the findings of the panel as they mirror the conclusions of Tipperary ETB's self-evaluation process and will further strengthen and underpin the outcomes from the lengthy robust reflective journey up to the review week. It is clear the review team acknowledge the stage Tipperary ETB is in its quality journey and recognise the stage in development of our ETB, and where the ETB is and where it needs to be. The review team highlighted the prioritisation of the integration of the legacy quality assurance systems and consideration of devolved authority. With 4 legacy quality assurance systems in Tipperary ETB, a project team is established and the process already underway with the end goal of a single QA system. Tipperary ETB recognises the value in the review team's recommendation for curriculum development and programme review process, including the establishment of a programme review body to audit existing provision. The Development and Support Unit within FET has plans for curriculum development structures and staffing, expected to be realised by the end of 2022. The merit of the systematic feedback, specifically learner voice, in the recommendations is very much accepted by Tipperary ETB, attested by the establishment of the Learner Voice Forum immediately following the Review week in February, with representation from across FET provision in the county. Across most recommendations from the review panel, significant work has already been undertaken by Tipperary ETB FET, with some actions completed and others underway, but due for completion within agreed timelines.

Tipperary ETB would like to sincerely thank the review team for its professional and constructive engagement, its externality and holistic view of our Further Education and Training provision, its commitment to the process and the compilation of the report. The commendations and recommendations named in the report will provide a platform for future development and progression in the ETB. Finally, we would like to thank all Tipperary ETB staff, learners and external stakeholders for their unwavering commitment to the process, ensuring its effectiveness and enormous value to the organisation.



Roger Kennedy
Chair of Board



Bernadette Cullen
Chief Executive



Colin Cummins
Director of FET



Appendices

The image shows a student's desk with several documents. The top document is a form with a grid and various fields, likely a data collection sheet or a survey. Below it, there are several pages of text, some of which appear to be lecture notes or a textbook. The student is holding a yellow pencil, ready to write or mark the documents.

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education & Training Boards

1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1.1 QQI established Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in April 2016, and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in May 2017¹². These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

1.1.2 The Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were established under the Education and Training Boards Act (2013). They are statutory providers with responsibility for education and training, youth work and other statutory functions, and operate and manage a range of centres administering and providing adult and further education and training (FET). ETBs also administer secondary and primary education through schools and engage in a range of non-accredited provision. These areas are not subject to quality assurance regulation by QQI.

1.1.3 In 2018, all sixteen ETBs completed re-engagement with QQI. Following this process each ETB established its quality assurance (QA) policy and procedures in accordance with section 30 of the Quality and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI recognises that those policies and procedures are reflective of the evolving and developmental nature of quality assurance within the ETB sector as it continues to integrate the legacy body processes.

¹² Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (QQI, 2019)

1.1.4 As outlined in QQI's Core QA Guidelines, quality and its assurance are the responsibility of the provider, i.e., an ETB, and review and self-evaluation of quality is a fundamental element of an ETB's quality assurance system. A provider's external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review of quality assurance by QQI. QQI review functions are set out in various sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) as amended (henceforth 'the 2012 Act'). The reviews relate to QQI's obligation under Section 27(b) of the 2012 Act (to establish procedures for the review by QQI of the effectiveness and implementation of a provider's quality assurance procedures) and to section 34 of the 2012 Act (the external review by QQI of a provider's quality assurance procedures).

1.1.5 An external review of quality assurance has not been previously undertaken for the ETBs, neither through QQI nor former legacy awarding body processes. QQI is cognisant of the ETBs' current organisational context in which the establishment of comprehensive and integrated quality assurance systems is an ongoing process. A primary function of the reviews will thus be to inform the future development of quality assurance and enhancement activities within the organisations. Following the completion of the sixteen review reports, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying systemic observations and findings.

1.1.6 The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with SOLAS (the state organisation responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring further education and training in Ireland) in carrying out a review of education and training boards. This will take the form of consultation with SOLAS on the Terms of Reference for the review and the provision of contextual briefing by SOLAS to review teams.

2 Purposes

2.1 QQI has specific multi-dimensional purposes for its quality assurance reviews. The Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards outlines six purposes for this review process. Those purposes, and the ways in which they will be achieved and measured, are as follows:

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through
1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews. • Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases of the review. • Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures. • Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB.
2. To provide feedback to ETBs about organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e., how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance. • Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level. • Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards. • Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.
3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent. • Publication of clear timescales and terms of reference for review. • Evaluating, as part of the review, ETB reporting on quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible. • Publication of the individual ETB reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences. • Publication of sectoral findings and observations.
4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings. • The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning.
5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB. • Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence. • Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context. • Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation
6. To provide an opportunity for ETBs to articulate their stage of development, mission and objectives and demonstrate the quality assurance of their provision, both individually and as a sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of self-evaluation reports, conducted with input from ETB learners and wider stakeholder groups. • Publication of the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences.

3 Objectives and Criteria for Review

3.1 The core objective of the external review is **to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of an ETB's quality assurance procedures**. As this is the inaugural review, it will have a particular emphasis on the arrangements established to date to support the operation of the quality assurance system. Recognising that the development and implementation of an ETB-wide quality assurance system and procedural framework is an ongoing process, the review will also have a forward-looking dimension and will explore the ETB's plans and infrastructure to support the ongoing development of these systems. The review will thus examine the following:

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality:

Evaluate the comprehensive oversight arrangements and transparent decision-making structures for the ETB's education and training and related activities within and across all service provision (for example FE colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers, collaborative partnerships/arrangements).

The governance and quality management systems would be expected to address:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) The ETB's mission and strategy

- How/do the ETB's quality assurance arrangements contribute to the fulfilment of these?
- Is the learner experience consistent with this mission?

b) Structures and terms of reference for the governance and management of quality assurance

- Are the arrangements sufficiently comprehensive and robust to ensure strong governance and management of operations (e.g., separation of responsibilities, externality, stakeholder input)?
- Is governance visible and transparent?
- Where multi-level arrangements exist (i.e., where responsibilities are invested in centre managers), is there sufficient clarity, co-ordination, corporate oversight of, and accountability for, these arrangements?

c) The documentation of quality assurance policy and procedures

- How effective are the arrangements for the development and approval of policies and procedures?

- Are policies and procedures coherent and comprehensive (do they incorporate all service types and awarding bodies?), robust and fit for purpose?
- Are policies and procedures systematically evaluated?

d) Staff recruitment, management and development

- How does the ETB assure itself as to the competence of its staff?
- How are professional standards maintained and enhanced?
- How are staff informed of developments impacting the organisation and how can they input to decision-making?

e) Programme development, approval and submission for validation

- What arrangements are in place to ensure alignment of programme development activity with strategic goals and regional needs?
- Are the arrangements for the approval and management of programme development robust, objective and transparent?
- What arrangements are in place to facilitate and oversee a comprehensive programme development process in advance of submission for validation (e.g., the conduct of research, inclusion of external expertise, writing learning outcomes, curricula etc.)?
- Are there structures in place to support collaborative programme development with other ETBs/providers?

f) Access, transfer and progression

- How does the ETB quality assure access, transfer and progression systematically across all programmes and services?
- Are there flexible learning pathways, respecting and attending to the diversity of learners?
- Are admissions, progression and recognition policies and processes clear and transparent for learners and implemented on a consistent basis?

g) Integrity and approval of learner results, including the operation and outcome of internal verification and external authentication processes

- What governance and oversight processes are in place to ensure the integrity of learner assessment and results?
- How does the ETB ensure that these arrangements provide for consistent decision-making and standards across services and centres?

h) Information and data management;

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that data are reliable and secure?
- How are data utilised as part of the quality assurance system?
- What arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records (including, where relevant, the sharing of learner data with other providers on national apprenticeships)?
- How is compliance with data legislation ensured?

i) Public information and communications;

- Is information on the quality assurance system, procedures and activities publicly available and regularly updated?

Indicative Matters to be Explored

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that published information in relation to all provision (including by centres) is clear, accurate, up to date and easily accessible?

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Evaluate the arrangements to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB and a high-quality learning experience for all learners. These will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) The learning environment

- How/is the quality of the learning experience monitored?
- How/are modes of delivery and pedagogical methods evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?
- How is the quality of the learning experience of learners on work placements ensured?
- Is there evidence of enhancement in teaching and learning?

b) Assessment of learners

- How is the integrity, consistency and security of assessment instruments, methodologies, procedures and records ensured – including in respect of recognition of prior learning?
- How is the standard of assessment of learners on work placements ensured – particularly where these are undertaken by non-ETB staff?
- Do learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and are they given feedback on assessment?

c) Supports for learners

- How are support services planned and monitored to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?
- How does the ETB ensure consistency in the availability of appropriate supports to learners across different settings/regions?
- Are learners aware of the existence of supports?

Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Evaluate the arrangements for the monitoring, review and evaluation of, and reporting on, the ETB's education, training and related services (including through third-party arrangements) and the quality assurance system and procedures underpinning them. It will also reflect on how these processes are utilised to complete the quality cycle through the identification and promotion of effective practice and by addressing areas for improvement. This will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) Self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including programme and quality review)

- What are the processes for quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting?

- Are the processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including the self-evaluation report undertaken for the inaugural review) comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based?
- Is there evidence of strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of internal quality assurance reviews and monitoring (e.g., review reports, external authenticator reports, learner feedback reports etc.)?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?

b) Programme monitoring and review

- How are programme delivery and outcomes monitored across multiple centres (including collection of feedback from learners/stakeholders)?
- Are mechanisms for periodic review of programmes comprehensive, inclusive and robust?
- Is there evidence that the outcome of programme monitoring and review informs programme modification and enhancement?
- Are the outputs of programme monitoring and review considered on a strategic basis by the ETB's governance bodies to inform decision-making?

c) Oversight, monitoring and review of relationships with external/third parties (in particular, with contracted training providers, community training providers, and other collaborative provision).

- How does the ETB ensure the suitability of the external parties with which it engages?
- Is the nature of the arrangements with each external party published?
- Is the effectiveness of these arrangements monitored and reviewed through ETB governance?
- Does the ETB assess its impact within the region and local communities?

3.2 In respect of each dimension, the review will:

- evaluate the effectiveness of ETB's quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of further education, training, and related services; and
- identify perceived gaps in the internal quality assurance mechanisms and the appropriateness, sufficiency, prioritisation and timeliness of planned measures to address them in the context of the ETB's current stage of development; and
- explore achievements and innovations in quality assurance and in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

3.3 Following consideration of the matters above, the review will:

- Provide a qualitative statement about the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation;

- Provide a statement about the extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (as listed at 3.4), to include an explicit qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;^{2F}¹³
- Provide a qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality; and
- Identify effective practice and recommendations for further improvement.

3.4 The implementation and effectiveness of QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines will be considered in the context of the following criteria:

- The ETB's mission and objectives for quality assurance;
- QQI's Sector-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards
- QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes;
- QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning;
- QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;
- QQI's Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training; and
- Relevant European guidelines and practice on quality and quality assurance

4 The Review Team

4.1 QQI will appoint a review team to conduct the review. Review teams are composed of peer reviewers who are learners; leaders and staff from comparable providers; and external representatives including employer and civic representatives. The size of the team will depend on the size and complexity of the ETB but in general will comprise five or six persons. A reviewer may participate in more than one ETB review.

4.2 QQI will identify an appropriate team of reviewers for each review who are independent of the ETB with the appropriate skills and experience required to perform their tasks. This will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, teaching and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed

¹³ <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows^{3F14}:

Chairperson

4.3. The chairperson is a full member of the team. Their role is to provide tactical leadership and to ensure that the work of the team is conducted in a professional, impartial and fair manner, and in compliance with the Terms of Reference. The chairperson's functions include:

- Leading the conduct of the review and ensuring that proceedings remain focused.
- Coordinating the work of reviewers.
- Fostering open and respectful exchanges of opinion and ensuring that the views of all participants are valued and considered.
- Facilitating the emergence of evidence-based team decisions (ideally based on consensus).
- Contributing to, and overseeing the production of, the review report within the timeline agreed with QQI, approving amendments or convening additional meetings if required.

Co-ordinating Reviewer

4.4 The co-ordinating reviewer is a full member of the team. Their role is to capture the team's deliberations and decisions during the proceedings and ensure that they are expressed clearly and accurately in the team report. It is vital that the co-ordinating reviewer ensures that sufficient evidence is provided in the report to support the team's recommendations. The role of the co-ordinating reviewer includes:

- Acting as the liaison between the review team and QQI; and, during the main review visit, between the review team and the ETB review co-ordinator.
- Maintaining records of discussions during the planning and main review visits.
- Co-ordinating the drafting of the review report in consultation with the team members and under the direction of the chairperson within the timeline agreed with QQI.

All Review Team Members

4.5 The role of all review team members includes:

- Preparing for the review by reading and critically evaluating all written material;
- Investigating and testing claims made in the self-evaluation report and other ETB documents during the main review visit by speaking to a range of staff, learners and stakeholders.

¹⁴ Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.

- Contributing to the production of the review report, ensuring that their particular perspective and voice (i.e., learner, industry, stakeholder, international etc.) forms an integral part of the review.
- Following the individual ETB reviews, providing observations to inform the development of the sectoral report.

5 The Review Process and Timeline

5.1 The key steps in the review process with indicative timelines are outlined below. Specific dates for each ETB review will be outlined by QQI in accordance with the published review schedule.

Step	Action	Timeframe
Preparation	Preparation of a provider profile by each ETB (e.g., outlining mission; strategic objectives; local context; data on staff profiles; recent developments; key challenges).	6-9 months before first main review visit
	Provision of ETB data by SOLAS (e.g., data on learner profiles; local context; strategic direction).	
	Establishment of review teams and identification of ETBs for review by each review team, selected in accordance with the ETB provider profiles and data and in consultation with ETBs on potential conflicts of interest.	
Self-Evaluation Report (SER)	Preparation and publication by ETBs of individual, inclusive, whole-of-organisation self-evaluations of how effectively they assure the quality of teaching, learning and service activities.	11 weeks before main review visit
Desk Review	Desk review of the self-evaluation reports by the review teams.	Before initial meeting

Step	Action	Timeframe
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training, briefing from SOLAS, discussion of preliminary impressions and identification of any additional documentation required.	5 weeks after submission of self-evaluation report 6 weeks before main review visit
Planning Visit	A visit to the ETB by the chair and co-ordinating reviewer of the review team to receive information about the self-evaluation process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss any additional information requests.	5 weeks after SER 6 weeks before main review visit
Main Review Visit	A visit to the ETB by the review team to receive and consider evidence from ETB staff, learners and stakeholders in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference.	11 weeks following receipt of self-evaluation report
Individual ETB Reports	Preparation of draft ETB review report by review team.	6-8 weeks after main review visit
	Draft report sent to ETB by QQI for a check of factual accuracy.	1 week following receipt by QQI
	ETB responds with any factual accuracy corrections	1 week following receipt
	Final report sent to ETB.	1 week following receipt of any factual accuracy corrections
	Response to review submitted by ETB.	2 weeks after receipt of final report

Step	Action	Timeframe
Outcomes	QQI considers findings of individual ETB review reports and organisational responses through governance processes.	Next available meeting of QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee
	ETB review reports are published with organisational response.	
Follow-Up	Preparation of an action plan by ETB.	1 month after QQI decision
	QQI seeks feedback from ETB on experience of review.	6 weeks after decision
	One-year follow-up report by ETB to QQI. This (and any subsequent follow-up) may be integrated into annual reports to QQI.	1 year after main review visit
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through annual reporting and dialogue processes.	Continuous

Appendix B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Date: 7th February 2022				
Day 1				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator(s)/Director of FET	Catherine O'Callaghan Colin Cummins	AEO Adult Education Officer (Review Coordinator) Director of FET (Further Education & Training)	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
10.00-11.00	1. ETB Chief Executive & SMT	Bernadette Cullen	Chief Executive	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
		Liam McGrath	Director of OSD (Organisation Support & Development)	
		Clodagh Kelly	Director of Schools	
		Colin Cummins	Director of FET (Further Education & Training)	
		Olivia Kennedy Murphy	AEO (Adult Education Officer) (FET Senior Management Team)	
		Kaye Mullaney	AEO (Adult Education Officer) (FET Senior Management Team)	
		Catherine O'Callaghan	AEO (Adult Education Officer) (FET Senior Management Team)	
		Matthew Ryan	Training Centre Manager (FET Senior Management Team)	
11.45-12.30	2. Self-Evaluation Team	Catherine O'Callaghan	AEO (Adult Education Officer)/Review Coordinator	Discussion of the development of the self-evaluation report
		Colin Cummins	Director of FET (Further Education & Training)	
		Síle McDonnell	MIS/PLSS (Management Information Systems/Programme & Learner Support System)	
		Carol O'Donovan	QA (Quality Assurance) Officer	
		Olivia Kennedy Murphy	AEO (Adult Education Officer)	
		Susan O'Reilly	Administration	

2pm-2.45pm	3. Parallel sessions with learners			Discussion of learner experience
3a	Parallel session 1 (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learners)	Cornelius Hickey	Community Education Clonmel	-
		Bernard Sweeney	Community Education Clonmel	
		Vinny Holden	Community Education South Tipperary	
		Tina Tuter	Adult Literacy Service Roscrea	
		Walter Heneghan	Community Education	
		Ger Purcell	Adult Literacy Service Templemore	
3b	Parallel session 2 (L4-5-6 learners)	Amanda Casey	VTOS Nenagh	-
		Daragh Stakelum	PLC Templemore College FE	
		Katelyn Collins	Youthreach Cappawhite	
		Culann Mostert	VTOS Nenagh	
		Laura Coughlan	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) Tipp Town	
		Eamon Stakelum	VTOS Thurles	

3pm-3.45pm (3c)	Parallel session 3 (Apprentices & other WB learners)	Wesley Bergin	Apprenticeship	-
		Eoghan Brerton	Apprenticeship	
		David McGearty	Apprenticeship	
		Proinséas Barrett	Traineeship	
		Niall Irwin	Specific Skills Training	
		Graham Lewins	Apprenticeship	
3pm-3.45pm (3d)	Parallel session 4 (Past Graduates in HE or employment)	James Clifford	PLC Nenagh	-
		Noreen Thompson	Contracted Training	
		Daniela Watson	PLC Templemore College FE	
		Rachel Fitzpatrick	Contracted Training	
		Pauline Perkowska	PLC Templemore College FE	
		Jade Beason	PLC Templemore College FE	
4.30-5.15pm	4. Parallel sessions with LEARNING PRACTITIONERS			Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
4a	Parallel session 1 (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learning practitioners)	Carmel Phillips	Community Education	-
		Melissa Somerville Ryan	Community Education	
		Finbar O' Shea	Adult Literacy	
		Ann Marie Sweeney	Adult Literacy	

		Alan Tobin	ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)/ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education)	
		Geraldine Hennessy	ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)/ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education)	
4b	Parallel session 2 (L4-5-6 learning practitioners)	Lucinda Dillion	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) Level 5 Learning Practitioner	
		Karen Stakelum	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) Level 6 Learning Practitioner	
		David O' Grady	Youthreach Learning Practitioner	
		Marguerite Ryan	BTEI (Back to Education Initiative) Level 4 Learning Practitioner	
		Harvey Allen	Evening Training Learning Practitioner	
		Caroline Egan	VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) Learning Practitioner	
4c	Parallel session 3 (Apprenticeship & other WBL instructors)	Sean Arthur	Apprenticeship Instructor	
		Paul Sherlock	Apprenticeship Instructor	
		Fiona Coffey	Traineeship Learning Practitioner	
		Paddy Tennyson	Specific Skills Training/Skills To Advance/Other Learning Practitioner	
		Ciarán Mangan	Specific Skills Training/Skills To Advance/Other Learning Practitioner	

Date: 8th February 2022				
Day 2				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Catherine O'Callaghan	AEO (Adult Education Officer)/Review Coordinator	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
10.00-10.45	5. Learner representatives	Michael Power	Adult Literacy Service/FET Committee/Past Learner	Discussion of mechanisms for learner voice
		Anita Bhime	VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) Carrick on Suir - Learner	
		Caoimhe Rice	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) Templemore	
		Chelsie Hartigan	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) Templemore	
		Robert Duggan	Community Education (South Tipperary)	
		Jason Stockil	Youthreach Cappawhite	
11.30-12.15PM	6. Parallel sessions with FET Coordinators			
	Parallel Session 1: Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators - Unaccredited/level 1-3 provision	Eoin Costelloe	Community Education Facilitator	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Mary Roche Cleary	Adult Literacy Organiser	
		Lavinia English	Adult Literacy Organiser	
		Deborah Ryan	Former Community Education Facilitator	

	Parallel Session 2 - Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators Level 4-6 provision (including training provision)			
		Noel Colleran	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) College Principal	
		Laurenz Egan	Centre Manager	
		Fiona Hennessy	Centre Manager	
		Patrick O'Sullivan	Training Centre Assistant Manager	
		Geraldine O'Brien	Centre Manager	
		Helen Ryan	Contracted Training Manager	
1.45-2.30pm	7. Second Providers (e.g., Representatives of Training Contractors, LTIs, CTCs)	Una O'Dwyer	CTC (Community Training Centre)	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		Rose Shanahan	CTC (Community Training Centre)	
		Maria Dunne	CONTRACTED TRAINING	
		Marisa Byrnes	CONTRACTED TRAINING	
		Gillian Scully	LTI (Local Training Initiative)	
		Jenny Ryan	LTI (Local Training Initiative)	
		Kitty Galvin	STP (Specialist Training Provider)	
3.15pm-4pm	8. Parallel sessions with external stakeholders			
8a	Parallel session 1 (Collaborating Providers)			Discussion of quality assurance arrangements for collaborative programmes
		Mary Kenny (DDLETB)	ESOL Development Officer and Cambridge Assessment English Centre Exams Manager in DDLETB	
		Louise MacAvin (SOLAS)	Assistment Manager of Enterprise Employees & Skills (SOLAS) - Digi Business Micro Qualification	
		Dympna Mullen	City & Guilds	

8b	Parallel session 2 (Community Providers & Groups, including representatives of Cooperation Hours)	Rita McCormack	NLN (National Learning Network) - Disability Group	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups
		Emer Leahy	Knockanrawley Resource Centre- Community Group	
		Ailish Moran/Mary Simpson	Rehab Care- Disability Group	
		Nuala Martin	Tipperary Rural Traveller Project -Community Group	
		Ann Sheppard	St Annes- Disability Group	
		Marie Therese Ryan	Ballinahinch Community Development -Community Group	
		Shoyna O' Reilly	Newport Womens Shed- Community Group	
4.45-5.30pm	9. Professional and Administration Services (finance, HR and Facilities/IT)	Columba Glavin	APO (Assistant Principal Officer) - Finance	Discussion of the relationship between the ETB's quality assurance system and its professional functions
		David O'Donnell	APO (Assistant Principal Officer) - Human Resources/ Information Communication Technology	
		Liam McGrath	Director of OSD (Organisation Support & Development)	
		Nuala Fraher	Head of HR (Human Resources)	
		Catherine Corcoran	APO (Assistant Principal Officer) - Corporate Affairs	
		Gerry Flynn	ICT Administrator	
		Fiona Campbell	Head of Corporate Affairs	

Date: 9th February 2022				
Day 3		Day 3		
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Catherine O'Callaghan	AEO/Review Coordinator	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
10.00-10.45	10. External stakeholders: Higher education	Seamus Hoyne (HEI - TÚS - Technological University of the Shannon)	Technological University of the Shannon & MidWest (TUS) - Dean of Flexible and Work Based Learning, Director of Industry Engagement at Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. / Tipperary ETB FET Committee	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs, including consideration of ATP
11.30-12.15	11. Learning Practitioners (cross-section of services and programmes) involved in programme development and review	Fergal Phelan	Commis Chef Instructor	Discussion of staff involvement in programme development & review
		Jane Quinlan	PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) - Templemore College of FE	
		Lillian Hahessy	Adult Literacy Resource Worker	
		Gavin O'Dwyer	Apprenticeship Instructor	
		Maire Shanahan	Unaccredited Prog Dev - Digital Citizenship	

1.45-2.30	12. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives	Edmond Connolly	Regional Skills Forum (South East)	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		Joe Leddin	Regional Skills Forum (Mid West)	
		Ann Harty	Rib World (Employer)	
		Annemarie Ryan	The French Quarter	
		Siobhan McDonald	Sure Com(Employer)	
3.30-4.15	13. ETB Employer Engagement Function	James Heffernan	Employer Engagement (Community Education Facilitator)	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local skills needs and quality assuring provision
		Lavinia English	ALO (Adult Literacy Organiser)	
		Katie Lonergan	Evening Training Manager	
		Damian Walshe	Apprenticeship Senior Training Advisor	
		Tommy Coleman	Apprenticeship Senior Training Advisor	
		Emma Wing	Recruitment Officer	

Date: 10th February 2022				
Day 4				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Catherine O'Callaghan	AEO/Review Coordinator	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
10.00-10.45	14. Pathways - Information Recruitment and Guidance	Tom Ryan	FET Guidance Counsellors	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression FET Manager, Work-Based Learning/IRG
		Martina Maher	FET Information Officers	
		Bridget Keating	FET Information Officers	
		Deborah Ryan	Active Inclusion CEF (Community Education Facilitator)	
		Emma Wing	Learner Recruitment	
		Clodagh Kelly	Director of Schools	
		Patrick O'Sullivan	Training Centre Asst Manager	
11.30-12.15pm	15. QA Governance	Colin Cummins	Director of FET	Discussion of the approach to, and mechanisms for, quality assurance and enhancement
		Olivia Kennedy-Murphy	AEO (Adult Education Officer)	
		Kaye Mullaney	AEO (Adult Education Officer)	
		Matthew Ryan	Training Centre Manager	
		Catherine O'Callaghan	AEO (Adult Education Officer)	
1.45-2.30pm	16. QA Governance (or equivalent) Sub-groups			

16a	Parallel session 1: Programme Governance Sub-Group	Kaye Mullaney	AEO (Adult Education Officer)/PAC (Programme Approval Committee) Chair	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of FET Division	
		Olivia Kennedy-Murphy	AEO (Adult Education Officer)		
		Matthew Ryan	AEO (Adult Education Officer)		
		Catherine O'Callaghan	Training Centre Manager		
		Colin Cummins	Director of FET		
16b	Parallel session 2: QA Sub-Group	QASG (Quality Assurance Steering Group)	Carol O'Donovan	QA/QASG (Quality Assurance Steering Group)	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of FET Division
			Louise Burke	QA/QASG (Quality Assurance Steering Group)	
			Noel Collerarn	Principal/QASG	
			Kathleen Grimes	BTEI Coordinator/QASG	
			Ester Mackey	ALO (Adult Literacy Organiser)/QASG	
			Jenny Whelan	FESS (Further Education Support Service)/QASG	
			Patricia Power	QA/QASG (Quality Assurance Steering Group)	
			Patrick O'Sullivan	Training Centre Asst Manager/QASG	
3.15PM-4PM	17. Quality Assurance Support Service Team	Carol O'Donovan	QA (Quality Assurance)Officer	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality	
		Louise Burke	QA CEF (Community Education Facilitator)		
		Patricia Power	QA CEF (Community Education Facilitator)		
		Tony Perez	QA Admin/TSO (Training Standards Officer)		
		Deirdre O'Dwyer	QA Admin/TSO (Training Standards Officer)		
4.45-5.30PM	18. FET Learner Support Services	Ciarán Kennedy	Wellbeing CEF (Community Education Facilitator)		
		Deborah Ryan	Active Inclusion CEF		
		John Heffernan	TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) CEF		

		Tom Ryan	FET Guidance Counsellor	
		Lavinia English	ESOL/Adult Literacy Service	
		Mary Roche Cleary	Adult Literacy Service	
		Ester Mackey	Adult Literacy Service	

Date: 11th February 2022

Day 5

Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Role	Purpose
9-9.30	19. Free Session			To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
10.45-11.30	20. Free Session	Kaye Mullaney	AEO (Adult Education Officer)	To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
11-11.30am	21. QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director	Catherine O'Callaghan Colin Cummins	AEO/Review Coordinator FET Director	QQI gathers feedback on the review process (Review Team not in attendance)
12-12.30	22. Oral Feedback: Feedback presented by Review Team Chair. Attended by ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners	Bernadette Cullen Liam McGrath Clodagh Kelly Colin Cummins Olivia Kennedy Murphy Kaye Mullaney Catherine O'Callaghan	Chief Executive Director of OSD (Organisational Support & Development) Director of Schools Director of FET AEO (Adult Education Officer) AEO (Adult Education Officer) AEO (Adult Education Officer)	Oral feedback on initial review findings

		Matthew Ryan	Training Centre Manager	
		Síle McDonnell	MIS/PLSS (Management Information Systems/Programme & Learner Support System)	
		Carol O'Donovan	QA Officer	
		Susan O'Reilly	Administration	

Glossary of terms

QQI glossary of terms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition/Explanation
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AONTAS	Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CAO	Central Applications Office
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Core	Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, developed by QQI for use by all Providers
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
Erasmus+	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
Fáilte Ireland	Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority
FET	Further Education and Training
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
Moodle	A free, open-source online learning management system (LMS) that supports learning and training needs
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications

PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality Assurance
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS (formerly FÁS)	The National Further Education and Training Authority (responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring FET in Ireland)
SPA	Strategic Performance Agreement (between the ETB & Solas)
TEL	Technology-Enhanced Learning
Youthreach	Service providing early school leavers without and formal qualifications with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience
VECs	Vocational and Education Committees (later became ETBs)