

Interim Quality Report

Donegal ETB Education and Training Board

Date: February - 2025





PREFACE

The inaugural review by QQI of the quality assurance in the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) took place between March 2021 and May 2022. Following the review, each ETB provided an **action plan** and **follow-up report** in response to the recommendations made in the individual review report. QQI's role is to monitor and review the QA of providers, and the effectiveness of the provider's internal QA system. Systematic quality reporting by providers is an integral part of this process. The development of an integrated and systematic annual quality reporting model for ETBs has commenced; for this quality reporting period, ETBs are submitting an interim quality report. This interim quality report records progress, developments and impacts in furtherance of recommendations arising from each ETB's review report, as well as other QA enhancements and initiatives.

In addition, the interim quality report requires each ETB to include updated links to its published quality assurance policies and procedures.

This is the follow-up report for **Donegal ETB**

It is to be submitted by 28/02/25

The follow-up report has been approved by <u>Donegal ETB Quality Council</u> and is submitted by <u>Joe Whitelock (Quality Assurance Officer)</u>

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1.0 Interim Quality Report

Include all links to published QA policies and procedures relevant to each section in the table below.

1.02 Structures & Terms of Reference for Governance of QA

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)

Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

1. The review team recommends wider representation of learners within the governance structures to strengthen the learner voice in ongoing self-evaluation at Donegal ETB. The regular systematic collection of student views and ensuring the inclusion of a wider diversification of voices within the formal structures will be fundamental to the shaping of Donegal ETB's improvement journey.

Donegal ETB continues to engage in mechanisms through which FET students can systematically and periodically contribute to QA developments and enhancements. Several mechanisms for the collection of the student voice have been employed throughout 2023/24 and these have been key to shaping the integrated QA system. This will be strengthened by the development of the student voice survey which will be launched in March 2025. Reporting of student feedback is delivered from course level to organisational level allowing for the student voice to contribute to QA developments and enhancements throughout the FET provision.

The collection of the student voice as a means of on-going evaluation and improvement is now well established.

This recommendation has been met.

6. The review team recommends wider and deeper engagement with both internal and external stakeholders to ensure that all voices, particularly the learner voice, can shape and influence the emerging single QA process.

Donegal ETBs FET Service continues to engage both formally and informally with industry and community stakeholders.

FET Staff in the Inclusion Team, i.e. Community Education, Literacy and ESOL, are in regular communication with community stakeholders regarding the development, delivery and evaluation of provision to meet local and national needs. Relevant information is communicated formally and informally through FET staff and Donegal ETB marketing strategy (e.g. Community Calendar, social media etc.) in relation to Onward Granting and to course provision in-centre and on an outreach basis.

Clear and established links between FET Staff enable queries to be referred to their colleagues in other departments. For example, referrals to courses offered through the Inclusion programmes are directed to the most appropriate stream of provision between Community Education, Literacy, and ESOL, or alternatively to the Skills for Work programme in the FET Enterprise Engagement Service.

Every second year, the Community Education Service hosts a countywide seminar for Community Stakeholders and Providers. At the Seminar, other services in FET attend and present to the assembled community stakeholders and groups.

Donegal ETB continues to regularly engage with local employers through enterprise engagement team activities. This engagement ensures that employers are included in programme evaluation through online surveys and focus groups which allows for external stakeholder feedback to be considered within the quality processes. Employers as subject matter experts are also invited to deliver staff information sessions as a means of upskilling staff in current industry work practices.

All employer engagement is documented annually in the Skills to Advance Planning Report which clearly identifies how the ETB engages with various groups and who these groups are. The report also contains clear annual key performance indicators (indicative targets) for employer initiatives.

This recommendation has been met.

8. The review team recommends wider representation on the QA governance structures. This will strengthen the shaping of Donegal ETB's improvement journey and will ensure the inclusion of a wider diversification of voices within the formal structures. Specifically, the review team recommends the inclusion of learners, industry and

Following the review of the QA governance membership the Programme Sub-Committee and QA Sub-Committee continue to have a wide representation within its membership. The Quality Council membership has been updated to include external representation from industry and community. To further strengthen the Quality Council structure a further review is needed in relation to longstanding membership and the balance of external and internal members.

This recommendation has been partially met.

community sector
representatives throughout the
QA structures as relevant; and
that systematic wider and
deeper engagement with these
groups to ensure all voices,
particularly the learner voice,
can shape and influence the
emerging single QA process.

1.03 Documentation of QA

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)

- 2. The review team recommends the development of a programme plan with clear priorities, targets and timelines to take its quality assurance journey to the next level. This should include the development of a route map to QA integration, supported by robust programme management with associated priorities, targets and timelines to drive continuous improvement.
- 9. Recognising work already underway to progress the QA integration project, the review team recommends that any further work undertaken include analysis of consistent and wide reaching qualitative and quantitative data for quality enhancement purposes and ensure regular thematic analysis and benchmarking.

Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline

A QA Operational Action Plan was developed and implemented. The plan supported the monitoring and progress of QA actions arising from the QQI Inaugural Review Report along with other QA actions/plans that support the development of the new QA system and operational day-to-day activities.

The QA Operational Action Plan is monitored by the QA Governance and Management groups. The Quality Assurance Steering group (QASG) is now deactivated.

10. The review team recommends the establishment of a robust programme plan with achievable timelines for the completion of the integrated quality assurance approach.

These recommendations have been met.

1.04 Staff Recruitment, Management & Development

Commentary and Reflections

The staffing structure of the Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS) has evolved since 2023. Titles throughout the structure represent a quality focus across all levels and a move away from traditional titles which may have implied a support for one area of the service. The purpose of the QASS is now seen as a support service for all areas across Further Education and Training.

An internal QA Portal has been developed as a means of communication and support across the FET Service and is regularly updated and improved to meet the requirements of new policies, procedures and working practice and in line with feedback from stakeholders.

1.05 Programme Development, Approval & Submission

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
11. The review team recommends the introduction of a consistent approach to programme development by Donegal ETB.	The Programme Development and Approval policy was reviewed after its first year of implementation in line with Donegal ETBs QA policy. Consultation included all relevant stakeholders from across the FET Service. Any suggestions for changes/improvements were reviewed and agreed by the Quality Sub Committee and the updated version was approved by the Quality Council in March 2023. The policy has entered a three-year review cycle. This recommendation has been met.
Quality and Qualifications Iroland (QQI)	

Commentary and Reflections

Since 2023 Donegal ETB has engaged in the successful differential validation of numerous programmes to meet local and national needs. Engagement with other awarding bodies has continued and approval of programmes through C&G, ITEC and IMI have been gained. In June 2024 Donegal ETB became an approved BTEC centre and are in the process of planning the delivery of the Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice (Nursing and Healthcare Support).

In 2024 Donegal ETB developed and validated a Specific Purpose Certificate (Special Purpose Award at NFQ Level 6) QQI award in Work Based Learning Practices. A Level 4 Special Purpose Certificate in the Introduction to Artificial Intelligence which has also been developed, has been submitted to QQI for validation.

Donegal ETB has played an active role in the national Programme Development Process with the review and update of QQI modules. In partnership with CMETB three CAS Module Descriptors have been reviewed and updated and sample assessment created. The work has involved online consultation with teachers/tutors/instructors, subject matter experts and employers on module content and assessment guidelines for each of these 3 modules. In addition, Donegal ETB staff have engaged in the wider consultations on revisions to other modules at National Level through the ETBI coordinated feedback process.

Link to Updated Policy & Procedures

Donegal ETB FET Service Programme Development and Approval Policy

1.07 Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
12. The review team recommends the urgent completion of a revised policy on the fair and consistent assessment of learners, which is currently being addressed by the ETB.	As part of the development of the new Integrated QA system the Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners Policy and associated Procedures has been completed and is now in its first year of implementation. This recommendation has been met.

Link to Updated Policy & Procedures Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners

1.08 Information and Data Management

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
13. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB develop its use of data for performance monitoring.	The Data Management Working Group continuous to be a driver to ensure that the use of the PLSS system is consistent and effective to meet overall FET targets and objectives across the FET provision. The group meets a minimum of 6 times per year and reports to the FET SMT.
	The group feeds into the national PLSS Advisory group, taking feedback from across the Donegal ETB FET service, to assist the National group in fulfilling the development, oversight, planning, co-ordination and improvement of PLSS/FETCH procedures, and processes at a national level.
	Donegal ETB representation on the National PLSS Advisory group ensures that Donegal ETB is kept up to date with national changes and enhancements in relation to data management.

As identified in 1.02 The collection of the student voice as a means of on-going evaluation and improvement is now well established, this will be strengthened by the introduction of the student voice survey. Reporting of student feedback is delivered from course level to organisational level allowing for the student voice to contribute to QA developments and enhancements throughout the FET provision.

Focusing on the recommendation to establish systematic ways of self-evaluation and monitoring which is supported by data, Donegal ETB data management officer regularly issues and monitors the data reports for self-monitoring and planning purposes:

- Certification reports formally reviewing certifications of learners at regular Certification Approval Board meetings
- Senior Management Team receives monthly MIS reports containing programme numbers per month outlining:
 - o number of learners "On Course",
 - o starters and finishers,
 - o breakdown of gender and age ranges,
 - o breakdown of course delivery type,
 - o breakdown of early finisher (<25% completed) or full or partial completers,
 - o outcome certification awards breakdown, course award levels and awarding bodies.
- individual ESF programme data gaps reports
- awaiting Certification Status reports
- commenced courses with no learner's report
- unprocessed referrals report
- finished courses with learners still on report
- projections vs Actuals report for managers

- monitoring Strategic Performance Agreed Targets with SOLAS and target explanatory guidance provided
- reports issued informed by generalised Internal Audit Unit feedback for learners start dates incorrect on the PLSS system (prior to course start dates).
- analysis of Donegal ETB support tickets raised with SOLAS to assess what our problem areas are and to ensure we are working towards correcting the source issues.
- governance and management data reports relating to FET certification and tracking of external authentication reports and actions.

Programme specific feedback sessions are held for programme coordinators to review their understanding and increase their capacity to use data to inform planning.

The development of a clear plan and robust procedure on the collection and use of data as part of the new integrated QA system is in development and is linked to the development of the Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy.

This recommendation is not yet met.

Commentary and Reflections

Whilst progress has been made in the use of data for performance monitoring as identified above, Donegal ETB is still developing standardised operational processes for all provisions across FET to ensure consistency for all Donegal ETB FET students.

1.09 Public Information and Communication

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	e Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
14. The review team recommends that Communications Advisory Group (CAC develop annual plans and KPIs which beyond social media engagement. 15. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB explore additional opport to develop and strengthen its commun strategy and channels and to consider ways of utilising digital communications internally and externally.	indicators have been monitored through media monitoring metrics, Google analytics and analytics through Donegal's largest media outlet. Media insight reports provide metrics which highlight how Donegal ETB's communications vary and includes print, broadcast and online communications. The report for 2023 showed a large increase that year in Donegal ETB's media items outputs compared to 2022 – up by 33%: print made the largest contribution, consistent with 2022 and 2021, followed by online and broadcast.

2023 and over almost 7k views in 2024 (to 31 October).

page views, with 51.3k views in 2024 (to 31 October). The FET section had just over 6.2k views in

Donegal ETB's blog (https://donegaletb.ie/blog/), set up in 2021, has gained momentum in the intervening years and now averages between 9-18,000 impressions each month. The purpose of the blog is to better explain who Donegal ETB is and what it does, allowing greater freedom in

terms of space, than social media. Blogs are written by a wide variety of stakeholders including staff, students, partners, employers, board members and funders, ensuring ownership of our work and service across a wide and varied audience. In relation to the FET Service, a 2021 blog on FET course interview tips remains one of the overall top performing blogs as the second most clicked blog since it began in 2021. Other top performing (most clicked) blogs from the FET Service in 2023 and 2024 include those focusing on outdoor activity instructors, tertiary degrees, Adult Literacy for Life, developing FET programmes, community education, supporting FET students through the student hub, supporting Donegal businesses to be sustainable and Erasmus Plus.

There has been an increase in the use of videos to market FET courses and events across our digital media platforms in 2023 and 2024 using staff and students. A strong emphasis has also been placed on web accessibility on our website and while not technically required on our social media platforms, it has been extended to them through alt text and approaching copywriting from a web accessibility perspective.

16. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB explore further opportunities to develop a structured rebranding and communications plan for the service, with defined targets and benchmarking, to fully engage with stakeholders and raise awareness of the services and support that can be offered.

The structured rebranding of the FET Service has been embedded over 2023/24. Branding across the service represents a new, fresher and more on brand visual appearance following the publication of our 2022-2026 Strategy Statement.

These recommendations have been met.

Link to Updated Policy & Procedures
Public Information and Communication Policy

2.0 Teaching, Learning & Assessment

2.01 The Learning Environment

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
 17. The review team recommends that all programmes be subject to progress reporting and that all teaching and learning is evaluated on a consistent basis to support data gathering and improvement. 5. The review team recommends the introduction of a consistent and comprehensive evaluation of programme delivery and the student experience to support the continued improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. 	Throughout 2023/24 further developments have been made in relation to student engagement to inform QA enhancements though the student voice activities and through local student engagement activities. A more systematic way of collecting feedback is being developed through the utilisation of a FET-wide student satisfaction survey. The survey is designed to elicit feedback relating to course content, delivery and assessment. Relevant reports will be elicited at a strategic (SMT) and operational (course) level to inform QA enhancements and future planning. Following receipt of the reports action plans are developed and implemented and will be reviewed on an annual basis to monitor improvements. As identified in 1.08 above, the utilisation of data reporting has improved. However, a consistent approach across the service is still required. This will be addressed in Donegal ETB's FET Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review policy which is in development. These recommendations are partially met.
7. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB make every effort to communicate its best practice examples more widely	The mechanisms identified in the previous Quality (follow up) report have been embedded in practice across the FET service. The development of the Fair & Consistent Assessment of Learners Policy concreted the practice of utilising Communities of Practice which saw representatives from across the service working together to develop the policy and its associated procedures. Extensive consultation across the service further enhanced the sharing of best practice. To support the implementation of the policy, information sessions were conducted with stakeholders across FET which allowed us to further embed a quality culture to further enhance the student experience.

This recommendation has been met.			

Commentary and Reflections

Donegal ETB aims to consistently enhance the quality of teaching and learning across all our centres, and services. Strategic Goal (priority) One, in the <u>Donegal ETB Statement of Strategy 2022- 2026</u> - "Achieve the highest quality standards of teaching, learning and assessment across all our education and training programmes".

2.02 Assessment of Learners

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
18. The review team recommends the introduction of a systematic approach to student engagement in course content, delivery and assessment as part of the annual programme review cycle.	Donegal ETB's FET service is working toward the development of a Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review policy and its associated procedures. Student engagement and the collection of the student voice to inform future developments of course content, delivery and assessment have been a key element for implementation as part of the programme review cycle. This is evidenced above in 1.02 and 2.01 which illustrates the systematic approach which Donegal ETB are implementing its student engagement mechanisms as part of the annual programme review cycle. This recommendation has been met.

2.03 Supports for Learners

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)

Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

19. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB reviews the provision of support across all services and works towards consistent and equitable application across the service and within each FET programme.

Throughout 2023/24 progress has been made in developing the provision of support that is consistent and equitable across the service. Further to improvements identified in the previous report Donegal ETB Adult Guidance service is now available across all full time and part time programmes within the FET Service.

The use of external organisations to deliver guidance-related workshops has minimised and is now only utilised for specific IT related programmes.

In addition to offering guidance and student support across the FET provision work has been undertaken to increase the capacity of front-line guidance skills for teachers and administration staff with a clear framework for referrals and access to guidance and support resources.

Accessibility to the service is being further developed and enhanced using the Student Hub and Staff QA portal as a means of locating key information, resources and referral.

This recommendation has been met.

20. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB explore opportunities for developing a structured best practice sharing approach for instructors and teachers to help ensure a greater level of consistency across programme delivery and improve the learner experience.

As identified in 2.01.7 mechanisms for sharing best practice are embedded in daily practice.

During 2023/24 Donegal ETB PLD sessions included Peer to Peer Learning and TEL Mentoring which facilitate the sharing of best practice and demonstrated how to support the improvements in the student experience.

Professional Development (PD) events are published on the Donegal ETB Staff Intranet. In 2023/24, Donegal ETB offered various PD sessions attended by over 400 staff over multiple courses. PD offerings included accredited and non-accredited training in the areas of, IT, Teaching and Learning, Mental Health, Disability Awareness, Wellbeing, Safeguarding, Digital Learning, Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence.

PD will continue to be planned around national and local themes and in response to feedback from staff, service demands and continual improvement recommendations from EAs and other internal and external stakeholders.

Access to external professional development is also encouraged and supported.

	This recommendation has been met.
21. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB explore opportunities for increasing learner engagement in the Student Surveys and Student Voice to ensure more representative feedback.	Student feedback mechanisms are utilised across the FET service in many ways. They are designed to ensure inclusivity and support the needs of the student cohort. As identified above (1.02,2.01) Donegal ETB continues to implement mechanisms for the regular and systematic collection of student views ensuring the inclusion of a wide diversification of voices within formal quality assurance structures. This reinforces systematic self-evaluation and monitoring which is supported by data and stakeholder feedback. This recommendation has been met.

3.0 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

3.01 Self-Evaluation Monitoring & Review

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)

- 3. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB make more effective use of data in any self-evaluation and the use of evidence to improve performance by making use of KPIs. The review team further recommends benchmarking within Donegal ETB to support quality enhancement to ensure consistency for each and every learner as well as scope for continuous improvement.
- 4. The review team recommends that Donegal ETB introduce continuous and systematic self-monitoring and evaluation to support organisational learning. This should be supported by data standards, targets and indicators as well as by benchmarking and the systematic collection of feedback from student, staff and stakeholder feedback.

Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline

The development of a Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review policy and its associated procedures are in development as part of a medium-term plan.

As identified in 1.02.1 key improvements have been made to engage in mechanisms through which FET students can systematically and periodically contribute to QA developments and enhancements.

1.02.6 illustrates how Donegal ETBs FET Service continues to engage both formally and informally with industry and community stakeholders to support the self-monitoring and evaluation process.

The development of Communities of Practice across programme areas allows for staff feedback to inform the self-evaluation and monitoring process. This is further supported by the extensive consultation across the FET service (and externally when required) when policies and procedures are in development or as part of the policy implementation and review process.

1.08 outlines how positive progress has been made with the introduction of regular reporting mechanisms at different levels within the organisation to support the effective use of data which informs organisational learning and continuous improvement.

It is recognised that while good progress continues to be made, a more consistent approach across the service is still required. This will be addressed in Donegal ETB's FET Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review policy which is in development.

These recommendations are not yet met.

Commentary and Reflections

As identified in our <u>Strategy Statement 2022- 2026</u> Donegal ETB aim to consistently enhance the quality of teaching and learning across all our centre through regular self-evaluation and quality assurance reviews in accordance with national standards. Furthermore, we will strive to develop and implement systems for monitoring and measuring outcomes of learning programmes, using quantitative data and feedback from students and staff.

3.02 Programme Monitoring & Review

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)

22. The review team recommends the introduction of a robust review framework to help Donegal ETB ensure its programmes are and remain fit for purpose and future-proofed against external environmental changes.

Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline

Feedback mechanisms are in place to support the review of current Donegal ETB programmes and inform the planning of future programmes.

In 1.02 above, it has been demonstrated how the student voice continues to inform programme enhancements, delivery, design and development.

1.05. The implementation of the Programme Development and Approval policy ensures that the development and validation of programmes is conducted systematically leading to fit for purpose programmes that are in line with Donegal ETB's FET Service and national Strategy for the FET sector. This is supported by the activities of the Integrated Planning Group whose purpose is to review and discuss the development and introduction of new programmes across the FET provision.

1.05 also illustrates how collaboration with other ETBs and Awarding Bodies are innovating our programme development, design and offer ensuring it is future proofed against external environmental changes.

1.06. The development and implementation of the Fair & Consistent Assessment of Learners policy is an example of how FET staff, students and other relevance stakeholders contributed to a consistent approach to policy and practice.

Extensive engagement with employers continues to influence and inform our provision ensuring it remains responsive to employer needs and fit for purpose.

This recommendation is partially met.

4.0 Update on other additional QA Objectives/actions arising from internal QA planning and monitoring

No.	QA Objectives These should relate to objectives not already discussed in the progress report.	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress.	Link to updated/new Policy
1	The purpose of this policy is to set out Donegal ETB's Further Education and Training (FET) Service policy and procedures regarding the expected behaviour of students participating on all its education and training programmes. It provides a framework which enables teaching staff and management to maintain satisfactory standards in work and conduct, while providing students access to a procedure whereby alleged failures to comply with standards may be fairly and sensitively addressed. The aim of the policy is to enable the learning environment to function in an orderly and harmonious way, creating an atmosphere which includes respect, tolerance, and consideration for everyone.	Completed	Student Disciplinary Policy
2	The purpose of this Policy is to promote a positive learning environment by emphasising the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. This Policy seeks to encourage success, personal responsibility and accountability among our students. Donegal ETB FET Service aims to enhance the educational experience available by setting clear guidelines and expectations for attendance.	Completed	Student Attendance Policy
3	The purpose of this policy is to present Donegal ETB's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion for all staff, students, and service providers. This policy has been developed to realise Donegal ETB's core values of excellence, equality, care, community and respect and to outline its obligations in these areas.	Completed	Donegal ETB Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy