Interim Quality Report

Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board

Date: February 2025

QQI
Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

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Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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 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 interim quality report for LOETB

It is to be submitted by [28/02/25]

The interim quality report has been approved by LOETB's Senior Management Team and is submitted by Anne Marie Keane

CONTENTS

GUIDELINES ON COMPLETING THE REPORT

This **interim quality report** provides a progress update to the ETB's inaugural review follow-up report, in addition to information regarding quality plans and initiatives in the ETB. Whereas details regarding all inaugural review recommendations were included in the follow-up report, please note that information relating to completed actions in response to recommendations, if any, are not required in this interim quality report.

Links to the published quality assurance policies and procedures of the ETB must be included in this interim quality report. Each ETB should ensure before submission that all links within the report are <u>correct and functional</u>, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available.

The ETB is asked to give particular attention to specific impacts arising from QA actions/initiatives, this includes:

- the key areas of focus prioritised for action and any specific changes arising as well as links to any associated outputs (e.g., procedures, reports etc.)
- reflections on the Follow-up reporting **process** and any barriers or challenges arising in implementation of the review recommendations.

The ETB is also asked to include additional **reflections** in the commentary.

The ETB is invited to provide up to 3 short case studies, 1-2 pages, demonstrating QA enhancements and their impacts.

There is a short survey on the follow-up process in Section 6. The results of this survey will be used to inform QQI and will not be published as part of this report.

1.0 Interim Quality Report

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

1.01 ETB Mission and Strategy

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
The review team recommends that LOETB mission & strategy be shared with and reiterated to staff at all levels and across all services and centres with greater frequency.	LOETB has developed a FET Communications Strategy to ensure that all learners, staff, communities and external stakeholders are supported and encouraged by our vision, values and organisational goals, in line with LOETB's Digital Communications Policy, adopted in 2020.
Commentary and Reflections A targeted Marketing Campaign approach was established in 2024, with a planned timeline of the events and initiatives to be promoted on social media, radio etc throughout the year. This led to much greater brand awareness and an increased social media following. In 2023, LOETB's FET Service launched a Creative Project competition for FET learners – applicants were required to submit a creative poster/video/artefact which represented LOETB's mission and core values. The aim of the competition was to increase awareness amongst staff and learners of the mission and values, and to encourage teamwork and collaboration amongst learners on our programmes. The Project attracted 14 separate entries and culminated in a very successful event in January 2024 where all applicants presented their entries, and prize-winners were chosen by an independent judging panel. The competition is an excellent opportunity for learners and their teachers to discuss and appreciate the core values of the organisation. Such was the success of the project that it has now become an annual competition.	
Link to Published Policies and Procedures FET Communications Strategy LOETB Digital Communications Policy	

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.
Management of Quality Assurance The review team recommends that LOETB engages in a full review of all existing policies and ToR which relate to the function and membership of management groups and subgroups. The review should take a particular focus on ensuring: • Consistency in relation to terms of reference and the organisational structure • Group membership that includes all relevant stakeholders • The provision of relevant inductions and ongoing training for all group members • Clarity and co-ordination between the various quality groups	LOETB conducted an extensive review of its FET governance structure and associated Terms of Reference of each of the FET Governance Groups, which is now available on the LOETB website.
Governance Groups in General The review team recommends that the ETB provide training for members of governance groups and that information from the various groups should be published on the LOETB website. Publication of information should also include communication with staff at centre and service level. This could be addressed in conjunction with the development of the internal communications strategy which is recommended elsewhere in this report. The review team also recommends that LOETB ensure increased clarity and co-ordination between the various quality groups. This would improve understanding of the system by all staff members. It would also improve efficiency and minimise the likelihood of nugatory duplication.	The revised governance structure was communicated to FET centre and services managers at a FET Forum meeting, and to FET staff via the FET Newsletter, and is published on the LOETB website.

Commentary and Reflections

The revision of the FET Governance structure has ensured that there is appropriate externality and involvement of centre and service staff on the relevant governance groups. In the past, specific staff members undertook several different roles on various governance groups, but the revised structure has eliminated duplication of roles.

There is now greater cohesion between the groups, and the membership of the various groups is such that it avoids unnecessary duplication and is relevant to the roles and functions of the groups and their members. The structure and its membership is more reflective of the current and evolving FET Service and its priorities.

Link to published policies and procedures

Governance Structure

1.03 Documentation of QA

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
The review team recommends that the ETB establish policy review groups without delay, taking into consideration the recommendations set out under Objective 1(b) and which should: • prioritise the remaining areas in need of policy development and proceed on that basis. • establish a formal schedule for a continual rolling review of existing policies. • publish all policies on the website, arranged under specific categories. These should be accessible to the specific groups to whom they are relevant, e.g., staff (password secured), learners, general public.	The Quality Forum has responsibility for identifying and prioritising the development and review of quality assurance policies and procedures. Policies that need to be developed or reviewed are identified on an academic year basis and are prioritised accordingly. Policy development and review groups are established as required, and present draft documentation to the Quality Forum for recommendation to the FET Management Team and Quality Council. The composition of the Quality Forum is such that it ensures that the interests of the entire FET Service are represented at draft policy consideration stage.

Commentary and Reflections
The Quality Forum has identified a target date of September 2025 for the publication of LOETB's FET QA Manual, which will encompass new and revised policies and procedures that have been approved since the establishment of the new FET Governance Structure. The QA Manual will be accessible to staff on the Staff Sharepoint, and will be available to the public on LOETB's website.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures
Terms of Reference of Quality Forum

1.04 Staff Recruitment, Management & Development

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Staff Professional Development The review team recommends a revision of the Staff Professional Development Policy to include: • Formal recognition of the position of Professional Development Coordinator • A mechanism to survey staff on CPD needs, which takes the centre as well as broader LOETB requirements into account. • A mechanism to establish communities of practice for teaching staff in specific areas as well as subject-specific areas. • Formal recognition of, and a structure for, an LOETB staff mentoring programme • Formal recognition of an induction process tailored to the needs of the various staff cohorts, including an input into the process which relates to LOETB as a corporate body. • A major focus on online/blended learning, which could be addressed in the context of an LOETB digital strategy, recommended elsewhere in this report. The review team also recommends that an appropriate model of teaching observation be introduced to support staff development and the realisation of institutional strategic objectives.	The LOETB FET Professional Development Policy was reviewed to provide a consistent approach to provision of PD opportunities for all staff working in FET. Decisions regarding funding and the amount of same will be made based on staff members' prior funding. This is to ensure that all staff have equal opportunities to avail of appropriate PD support, and to ensure that funding for FET is based on prioritised areas and relevance to staff members' specific role. LOETB is currently completing a Gap Analysis with reference to QQI QA Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes - it is anticipated that the results of this gap analysis will help inform a PD plan for staff involved in blended and online programmes.
Commentary and Reflections	

A new PD Coordinator commenced in January 2023 and the role has been an integral addition to the FET team in coordinating individual and collective FET staff PD activity. The Coordinator initially met each centre and service manager to identify their priorities for PD. In mid-2023, FET staff were surveyed to help identify and inform the PD strategy and agenda for the coming academic years.

A monthly PD Calendar is available to all staff, which keeps staff informed of local and national (ETBI and FESS) PD opportunities. At the start of the 2024/25 academic year, the PD Coordinator and QA team compiled an intensive three-week schedule of PD activities which resulted in 675 participants engaging in targeted PD sessions in a range of different topics, the majority of which was delivered by in-house staff, which demonstrated the level of expertise LOETB has within the organisation.

Communities of Practice have been established, with responsibility for their coordination delegated accordingly, in Early Learning and Care, Healthcare/Nursing, Communications, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Guidance and Learner Support (with other areas planned).
The staff in each centre and service have access to a designated QA contact who provides support on QA-related issues. Each new teaching staff member is provided with a new staff briefing and follow-up support, as well as training and support on Moodle etc. In 2024/25, QA contacts have commenced a fortnightly visit to the centres to meet with staff members for troubleshooting, or to deliver Staff Briefings to new staff members.

A scoping exercise was completed with a view to the establishment of a formal Staff Mentoring programme, to support new teaching staff in their initial years of teaching in LOETB's FET Service. The programme will involve input from QA staff, experienced teaching staff and the FET Management team. Fourteen teaching staff members have volunteered to take on various mentoring roles in the roll out of the programme.
A FET Staff Induction resource was developed in 2024 and was so well received that an organisational decision was made to expand the resource to include Schools and OSD staff also.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures
LOETB FET Professional Development Policy

1.05 Programme Development, Approval & Submission

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Programme Development & Validation The review team recommends: • Training and support to be provided to staff in programme development and validation. Staff secondment to programme development initiatives which are relevant to LOETB and being led by other ETBs, should be facilitated where possible.	LOETB has gained valuable experience in making applications to QQI, for validation of new programmes and for differential validation of programmes developed by other ETBs and by SOLAS in the last number of years.

Commentary and Reflections

The following programmes have successfully been validated:

Non-CAS/Programme Derived Award Standard Awards:

• Level 5 Special Purpose Award in Construction Skills for Energy Conservation, comprised of three 10-credit minor awards, developed as part of LOETB's Construction Pathway, in its capacity as a NZEB Centre of Excellence, and shared for differential validation with the other NZEB Centres of Excellence

• Level 4 Retrofit Assistant Skills – a 10-credit Special Purpose Award, again developed as part of a Construction career pathway for learners

• Level 5 Scaffolding Apprenticeship – successfully validated in 2020 and re-validated in 2024

LOETB has developed expertise in programme development since 2020 and intends to further develop capacity with planned programme development projects in the coming years, including the development of a new Apprenticeship programme in Overhead Line Worker (pending approval of proposal submitted to Apprenticeship Council in February 2025).

Link to Published Policies and Procedures
Click here to enter text.

1.06 Access, Transfer and Progression

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Access, Transfer and Progression The review team recommends an over-arching LOETB policy or suite of policies on access, transfer and progression for learners, which will: • Set out and clarify the standard application procedures across LOETB services. • Clarify the status of learner applications. • Outline transfer and progression routes as well as the transfer of credits that apply to all validated programmes. • Detail a formal internal transfer system, applications for which should be underpinned by policy and procedures. The review team recommends that training and support be provided to centres and services, to ensure consistent implementation of the induction process.	LOETB's Admissions Policy is due to be presented at the next Quality Council meeting for approval and will be implemented immediately after approval. A suite of Learner Induction resources has been made available to all centres and services and are used for all new intakes of learners. This helps to ensure that learners are provided with consistent information about the programme they are commencing and the supports available to them. LOETB have developed a suite of visual resources which aim to publicise progression opportunities within LOETB centres and services. The resources are on display in each centre. A Recognition of Prior Learning Policy is under development presently, which will help to clarify opportunities for learners to transfer from one programme to another, or to progress to another programme, based on prior certified and experiential learning. A Scaffolding-specific RPL process has been rolled out for the Scaffolding apprenticeship, which provides an opportunity for those who have previously worked in the scaffolding industry to gain accreditation.
Commentary and Reflections Click here to enter text.	
Link to Published Policies and Procedures Admissions Policy is awaiting approval from Quality Council. Recognition of Prior Learning Policy is at development stage.	

1.07 Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
The review team recommends that LOETB: • Investigate the possibility of providing an opportunity within the RAP for teaching staff and EAs to review the outcomes of the Exam Board's deliberations and, where appropriate, a mechanism to challenge their findings. • Strengthen the process around the communication of feedback from EA reports to teaching staff (involving the EAs if possible) and as part of that process that examples of good practice are also highlighted. • Ensure that all policies and procedures relating to the assessment process are accessible in a specific section for learners on the LOETB website. This could be undertaken in conjunction with the recommendation (Section 1i) relating to internal communications and review of the web site.	External Authenticators are provided with EA Guidelines which specify that recommendations for grade changes should be made following a conversation with the relevant assessor. Where a grade change has been recommended, the centre or service is expected to confirm with the assessor whether or not they are satisfied with the recommendation, and the assessor is provided with the opportunity to make a submission to the Results Approval Panel, where a decision regarding the recommended grade change will be made. All QA-related policies and procedures are available on the password-protected section of the website and are also on Sharepoint. The introduction of new policies and procedures is also communicated in the FET Newsletter and in annual staff briefings. The QA team holds online briefings regarding new policies and procedures and makes recordings of these briefings available on Moodle for all teaching staff.

Commentary and Reflections

Centre and service managers are expected to communicate individual feedback from the Internal Verification and External Authentication processes to each teacher/tutor. This has presented as a challenge, particularly during certification periods where there are very high volumes of portfolios being presented. The QA team are piloting the communication of IV and EA feedback on each teacher's Moodle tile for the 2024/25 academic year. This helps to ensure that all teaching staff receive their feedback in a timely manner and are facilitated to implement corrective actions for future submissions. The feedback is often very complimentary and tends to highlight examples of good practice – such feedback helps us to identify opportunities for the sharing of such good practice in communities of practice or in the organising of local PD activity.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures
External Authentication Guidelines

1.08 Information and Data Management

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
The review team recommends that, as a matter of urgency, there be an increased focus on the inclusion of all relevant learner data on the PLSS system as part of the application process, as well as the appointment of a specialist data analyst to the IT or QASS Team.	In August 2024, a member of staff was designated a specific Data and Information Management role on the FET Services team which indicates LOETB's commitment to the collection and analysis of relevant data to inform strategic decisions.

Commentary and Reflections

The new Data and Information Management role involves ensuring accuracy and completeness of learner data, generating regular reports in relation to inputs, retention, outcomes and progression, and complying with information requests for auditing purposes. The establishment of this role has been extremely beneficial, particularly in relation to making strategic decisions about FET provision.

The importance of accurate and comprehensive data entry on PLSS is highlighted to centre and service staff on a regular basis. All PLSS users have access to a Teams Channel where updates are communicated in a consistent manner to all stakeholders, and where users can ask questions or seek advice about PLSS usage.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures
Click here to enter text.

1.09 Public Information and Communication

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Information to Learners The review team recommends that every available opportunity be used to better highlight FET opportunities and pathways for school leavers as well as for current LOETB learners. This should be addressed as part of the review of communications recommended in Section 1i.	LOETB's Communications team worked with relevant centres and services in 2024 to develop an informative and engaging video that highlights the range of progression opportunities to those that have finished second level education. The video was publicised on all LOETB social media platforms and made available to local second-level schools' guidance staff and was very well-received. LOETB's Communication Strategy refers to a focus on targeted advertising on social media and tracking of same. The level of engagement with social media has grown enormously over the last 5 years. While some of our advertising on social media is aimed at school finishers, there is also a focus on reaching the parents and family members of that cohort, so a multi-faceted approach to advertising FET provision is taken to ensure increased awareness amongst school leavers. Learners from LOETB's Adult Literacy Service participated in an AONTAS Learner Ambassador Training programme in 2024, aiming to empower learners to tell their stories of returning to education and the impact of FET on their lives. Individual learner videos featuring these learners were launched at a FET Staff Event for Inclusion Week in October 2024 and were broadcast on all social media platforms to promote returning to education. The videos have been nominated for an AONTAS Star Award.
Communication The review team recommends an immediate focus on developing an internal and external communication strategy, which would include amongst others the following initiatives:	A LOETB House Style Guide is being developed, which will be based on Public Service Guidelines and NALA Plain English Guidelines.

• Advancement of the proposal to develop information hubs as soon as circumstances allow.
 	
• More comprehensive and targeted use of social media
 	
• Additions to the web site, to include:
    ○ A search facility to assist navigation
    ○ A FAQ section in the staff zone with a focus on QA policies and procedure
	The Information Hubs in both Portlaoise and Tullamore have been officially opened and have proven to be an excellent public amenity, with the level of drop-in queries increasing year on year, with over 1500 drop-in queries in 2024.
	The LOETB website will be replaced in the coming months – this is an overall organisational project but an excellent opportunity to streamline the information relating to FET on the site, making it easier and more user-friendly for members of the public to find important information, especially in relation to policies and procedures. QA-related information is currently housed on the password-protected Staff Section of the website but will ultimately transition fully over to the Staff Sharepoint area.

Commentary and Reflections

The National Construction Training Centre at Mount Lucas operate two fully-equipped mobile rigs to promote careers in construction and apprenticeships in schools. This has been a hugely successful initiative that has expanded outside of our own region with the rigs going all over the country to schools and to local authorities.

Other programmes include agriculture, Barista and Restaurant Service. Portlaoise Institute hosted workshops for TY students as part of its FET Awareness Week where they can participate in hands-on taster sessions in the programmes available in the centre, which provides an opportunity to explore different subject areas before making subject decisions for their Senior Cycle education.

A targeted Marketing Campaign approach has been implemented since 2024, with very successful results. Tracking of social media has provided interesting insights into what audiences respond well to, and this has been considered when planning subsequent marketing campaigns.

The LOETB Communications app has been welcomed as an opportunity for staff to share good news stories about their respective centre/service activity with their colleagues across the ETB. There are 155 registered users actively sharing and engaging with content. The FET Newsletter has also been a very popular source of information for staff members about developments, changes and activity across the service.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures

Click here to enter text.

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.
Monitoring the Learning Experience The review team strongly recommends that formal arrangements be standardised across all LOETB centres and services to ensure the surveying of student feedback and that these surveys be undertaken at key stages during the course delivery cycle.	A "*Self-Evaluation Pack*" was developed for centres and services, which comprises a range of digital resources to be used when conducting a Self-Evaluation of the centre/service (more detail in section 3.01). An important feature of the Self-Evaluation Pack is a range of digital but printable surveys that could be circulated to learners and staff to gather feedback at three different stages of a programme: • Post induction • Mid-course • End of course
The review team further recommends that LOETB support the continued development of online tools and digital resources as part of the QA system.	Since COVID19, LOETB has made significant developments in its use of online tools and digital resources in its FET provision. All learners on Level 5 and 6 programmes use Moodle to submit assessments and to complete exams (exams are completed in centre only, not remotely). The QA team administer Moodle and provide support to all teaching staff and learners in its use. We are continuously developing and enhancing the use of additional features of Moodle – for example in 2024/25 academic year, we have introduced the following and supported teaching staff in their implementation: • Safe Exam Browser • Turnitin • Audio recording of exam questions • SensusAccess

Commentary and Reflections

LOETB has been delighted to collaborate with AONTAS to host a number of AONTAS FET Learner Forum events for LOETB learners, most recently in November 2024. Learners have reported having very positive experiences at these events, where they are encouraged to provide open and honest feedback about their experiences of FET programmes in LOETB. Those that were unable to attend the event were encouraged to complete an online questionnaire. LOETB values this opportunity to receive impartial feedback from learners.

SafeExam Browser has been installed for Moodle exams to enhance integrity of the assessment process. The software, once activated, closes off all other applications on the device while the exam is in progress.

Turnitin software has helped to identify instances of assessment malpractice and use of Artificial Intelligence. Training and support are provided to all relevant staff in its use and how to deal with instances of suspected malpractice.

Audio Recording on Moodle exams whereby teachers can attach an audio recording of each of their questions to the exam. Learners can use headphones to play the audio during the exam. This has been welcomed particularly by learners who would normally require a reader for their exams – this feature means that the learner can stay in the same exam room as their peers and can listen to the audio several times if they wish.

SensusAccess software has been purchased by LOETB, again to ensure that our learners have an inclusive learning experience on our programmes. The software enables the learner to convert teachers notes, or resources to a more accessible format, which will help them to engage better with the content. The software has been installed on the LOETB website and onto Moodle.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures

Click here to enter text.

2.02 Assessment of Learners

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Assessment of Learners The review team recommends that LOETB establish a policy and procedures to support RPL and that it should also introduce formal arrangements, standardised across all centres and services to ensure: • Clarity for all students around module descriptors • Facilitation of teacher planning in the delivery of modules while avoiding content overlap. Regular student feedback on assignments and assessments	The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy draft will be presented to Quality Forum for consideration in March 2025. The development of this policy has considered the many ways that learners can potentially gain certification in recognition of prior experiential or certified learning – as such, it requires consultation from a range of different stakeholders.
Work Experience / Work Placement Module The review team recommends that LOETB engage the expertise of the Employer Services Team to: • Review the current arrangements that are in place to support the consistency of workplace competency assessment. Recommend the formal arrangements necessary for the delivery, monitoring and assessment of work experience/Placement	LOETB Communities of Practice have created focussed work experience workbooks/task lists for specific vocational areas such as Healthcare/Nursing, Early Learning and Care, and Hospitality. This approach ensures that a consistent approach is taken by workplace supervisors when a learner does a work placement. It provides clarity around what can be reasonably expected of the learner while on placement, and the key skills and competencies that learners should be able to demonstrate in their work.
Commentary and Reflections Oversight of work placement is an ongoing challenge and is an area that LOETB aims to focus on in the coming years. LOETB personnel participated in research conducted as part of QQI study as part of development of new QA Guidelines for Work Integrated Learning. This will be a valuable resource and guide in the development of work-based learning approaches.	

The Work Experience Workbook / Task List approach works well in specific vocational areas where there is a common approach taken regardless of the organisation. It is more challenging in other areas to define the common tasks that should be undertaken.

Learners are provided with a comprehensive induction on commencement of their programme and are provided with an assessment schedule at an early stage. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with other teaching staff on the programme to ensure that the assessment schedule does not place an unfair burden on learners at particular times. Teachers are also encouraged to consider the integration of assessment across modules to lessen the burden of assessment where there is a potential crossover in module content. Training is provided in relation to integration. The national Module Update Process is an opportunity for some modules to be reviewed and updated and for assessment techniques to be considered that may reduce the potential for over-assessment. There is a tendency for assessors to over-assess as they want to be sure that all learning outcomes are evidenced fully so changing the mindset of assessors will be a gradual process.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures
Recognition of Prior Learning Policy is currently in development and is expected to be finalised and adopted for implementation in September 2025.

2.03 Supports for Learners

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
The review team recommends that LOETB appoint a learner support officer to establish a de facto learner support service, consolidating all existing learner supports.	A FET Access Officer was appointed in September 2023 who coordinates the Learner Support Worker Community of Practice. The establishment of this role has led to a more consistent approach to the identification and provision of learner supports throughout the service, particularly in relation to Assistive Technology, Dyslexia Screening and LENS Development. The Access Officer has made resources and training videos in relation to UDL available to all teaching staff on LOETB's Moodle platform.
Commentary and Reflections LOETB's Inclusion Week is an annual event in the FET Calendar – a week in which an extensive calendar of events and training take place to highlight good practices in ensuring learners' experiences of FET are as inclusive as possible.	
Link to Published Policies and Procedures Dedicated learner supports area on LOETB website: https://www.loetb.ie/learnersupports	

3.0 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

3.01 Self-Evaluation Monitoring & Review

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review The review team recommends that LOETB work to embed a formal process of self-evaluation from institutional level up through to SMT and board level, and that this should be more fully documented in a form of a 'quality manual/handbook' or similar. The process should be structured to include, among others: • The FET Management Team as well as the QASS in order to facilitate the evaluation of provision at centre and service level on a formal basis and so that the entire process can be considered at a strategic level. • The learner voice across all centres and services.	A Self-Evaluation Pack was developed to support each centre and service to conduct a consistent self-evaluation of their provision. The Pack included resources for self-evaluation of the following areas: • Recruitment process • Course Overview • Programme Delivery & Assessment methods • Support & Feedback • Resources • Access, Transfer & Progression • Certification Process • Facilities • Staff feedback • Staff development • Assessment process To date, over half of the centres and services have commenced or completed their Self-Evaluation, with the support of a FMT member. Feedback from the Self-Evaluation process for each centre or service was discussed at FMT level, with actions identified arising from the process. The Self-Evaluation Pack has served as a very effective tool to facilitate a comprehensive and well-considered evaluation process, which helps inform decision making.

SER Steering Group The review team recommends that the actions identified in the SER, together with the recommendations in this report, be incorporated into a strategic plan – such as the annual QIP – with SMART targets and embedded in a projected timeline.	The Inaugural Review Implementation Steering Group convenes twice a year to review progress on the Inaugural Review Action Plan.
Self-Evaluation Monitoring and Review The review team recommends a full revision and subsequent issuing of the documentation associated with TQAS	All TQAS forms and documentation used by the QA team was reviewed and amended in 2020/21 and rolled out to the relevant external training organisations via in-person briefings. Documentation is continuously reviewed to reflect changes in provision, or in policies and procedures.
The review team recommends a review of the effectiveness of the FET centre model	A review of the effectiveness of the FET Centre model has commenced, using Edenderry FET Centre as its focus. It is expected to be concluded by the end of this academic year.
Commentary and Reflections Some progress has been made in replacing outdated Assessment Instrument Specifications with more user-friendly sample assessments. The main subject areas where progress has been made has been in the Healthcare and Business areas. A Working Group is being formed to plan and oversee the transition from AISs to locally devised assessments for Level 3 and 4 provision in Community Training provision. A plan of action, with timelines and milestones, which will feature a significant amount of professional development, will be required here for an effective and efficient transition.	
Link to Published Policies and Procedures LOETB's Quality Assurance Manual is being developed presently and will be published in September 2025.	

3.02 Programme Monitoring & Review

Recommendation (as recorded in the review report)	Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.
Programme Review The review team recommends that there should be a policy to underpin an annual review of programmes (as suggested Objective 3, Section (a)), with the review of programmes taking place strategically on an annual rolling basis at ETB level.	With the introduction of the new FET Data and Information Management role, LOETB's FMT has been able to utilise data to review provision based on reliable data. This has facilitated the FMT to make strategic decisions about provision based on LOETB's strategic priority areas and the outcomes and performances of programmes.

Commentary and Reflections

ELC programmes are reviewed annually – including programme content, assessment, employer feedback, learner feedback, number of starters, retention rates and certification rates and outcomes. A similar approach is taken with healthcare provision. Bot are undertaken by the communities of practice and the FET Manager responsible for strategic decisions, supported by relevant data.

It was intended to commence a review of Business and IT provision – this has been paused until the initial phase of the National Module Update Process has been completed, as the modules chosen for this phase are predominantly in the Business / IT area. Once the new module descriptors are available, this will commence. Terms of Reference for the review group are under development.

Link to Published Policies and Procedures

Click here to enter text.

4.0 Quality Developments and Enhancements

In this section, please provide an update on QA developments and enhancements within the ETB. This could include programme and curriculum developments and initiatives, and enhancements of teaching, learning and assessment.

Guide:

An update should be provided on any objectives/planned actions for the year **not already addressed in the Interim quality report in sections 1-3.**

The table is designed to assist in this process and should include headline information only.

No.	QA Objectives	Update on Status	Link to updated/new Policy
	These should relate to objectives not already discussed in the progress report.	Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress.	
1	Collaboration with LOETB second-level schools to facilitate the provision of QQI Levels 1-3 provision for students in ASD Units	Staff briefing and training provided to 3 schools, certification	Click here to enter text.
2	Establishment of Service Level Agreements with community organisations in the region to facilitate QQI provision.	SLAs established with Acorn Edenderry and Ballycommon TTC	Click here to enter text.

5.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies (optional)

Guide:

The ETB is invited to provide up to 3 x **short case studies**, 1-2 pages, demonstrating QA enhancements and their impacts (these may relate to topics covered in sections above). **You are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other providers and would benefit from wider dissemination**. Note: Submission of case studies are not mandatory. However, please know that any submitted case studies will be published on QQI's website in full unabridged format.

Guideline for Case Study

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

⇒ Be between half a page and two pages in length

⇒ Limited to 2-2500 words

⇒ Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue

⇒ Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters

⇒ Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis

⇒ Include links to any sources cited

⇒ Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning

Case Study Title: Introduction of Safe Exam Browser on Moodle for online Exams

Introduction

LOETB is committed to ensuring that assessments are conducted with the utmost integrity. Since COVID19, all exams at Levels 5 and 6 are conducted online, with learners completing the exam on Moodle in their classroom, invigilated by an Exam Supervisor. This led to significantly increased efficiencies, including no paper being used, corrections completed online, and in some cases corrections are automated.

Description of issue

There was a risk that learners might access other IT applications (e.g. Google, or their own course notes, or may be able to email each other) during the online exam. A few cases had been detected, and the malpractice was dealt with appropriately. This would significantly impact on the integrity of the assessment process. Strategies were put in place to decrease the likelihood of this happening, e.g. exam supervisor at back of the room, or moving around the room, to be able to see the learner's screen during the exam. However, while this reduced the risk, it did not fully remove the opportunity for malpractice.

Action

In Summer 2024, the QA Team researched and trialled the use of Safe Exam Browser software on Moodle, which would disable all other applications on the device while the exam was in progress. The software was successfully installed and introduced for all exams in all centres from September 2025. Roll-out of this software required all classes having to do a trial run to ensure that the software was working. Teachers cooperated willingly with the implementation process due to the clear and unarguable rationale for the software, and the implementation process has been very smooth.

Key Outcomes/Impacts

The impact of this software is that there is extra reassurance that the integrity of the assessment is safeguarded. Assessors and supervisors are confident that the software is effective while also being non-adversarial – learners do not feel like they are being watched.

Key Learnings

The introduction and implementation stages were very important in this case – it was important that the software was trialled during the summer for text exams to identify any pitfalls or specific actions that needed to be taken, or any potential pitfalls. It was also very important that assessors were supported in setting up their exams and ensuring that Safe Exam Browser was installed, and that the trial runs were conducted to identify any issues prior to the day of the exam. These actions helped to make the transition process easier.

Case Study Title: Inclusive Exam Experience for Learners

Introduction

LOETB is committed to ensuring that FET provision is as inclusive as possible for our learners, and that our learners are facilitated and accommodated in a comfortable and reassuring way based on their own individual needs.

Description of issue

We have noticed an increasing level of requests for Reasonable Accommodation requests in recent years – due in some part to learners' increased awareness of the supports that are available through both the FET Access Officer and each centre's Learner Support Workers. There was a huge increase in learners being granted readers for exams – this meant centres needed extra exam rooms, and readers, and yet, it had been observed that often the learner would not always require the reader or may not have had the confidence to ask the reader to repeat the questions for them.

Action

The FET Access Officer queried the availability of software on Moodle that would enable the learner to listen to an audio version of the exam questions during the exam. On further investigation, the QA team researched and tested the capability to have audio recorded by the assessor for each question on the exam. With the support of the FET Access Officer, the facility was trialled in some centres in Semester 1 of the 2024/25 academic year. Learners that would normally have a reader were given the option of using the audio technology – most were happy with this option, while others preferred to have their own exam space, and this was facilitated without issue.

Key Outcomes/Impacts

The introduction of this facility has made the exam process a more inclusive experience for learners. Feedback from learners that used the software was very positive; they were happy to be able to stay in the exam room with their peers and were more comfortable replaying the audio several times than they would have been asking the reader to repeat the question. Learners also commented that listening to their teacher's voice asking the questions provided some reassurance for them, rather than it being an automated voice.

The added benefit of this facility is that all learners can benefit, not just learners that require RA. Assessors found the process to be very straightforward, and are happy to record the audio for all exams, regardless of whether or not there is a learner that needs RA. This approach is in line with LOETB's dedication to UDL.

Key Learnings

The key learning here is being able to offer choice, to ensure the learning environment is more inclusive. LOETB is committed to ensuring that learners are facilitated to make choices about their own learning and their own needs.

Case Study Title: Encouraging Learner Voices

Introduction

LOETB acknowledges the importance of listening to the learner voice to help steer the future of FET in Laois and Offaly. Learner feedback is very important to the organisation and helps to inform decision making.

Description of issue

LOETB is keen to adopt a multi-faceted approach to listening to learners about their experiences and their motivation for returning to education. The approach involves several opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences, through surveys, AONTAS Learner Forum events, and through regular monitoring activities by centre and service management and staff.

Action

The Adult Literacy Service engaged in an innovative project with AONTAS whereby a number of our learners engaged in Ambassador training to empower them to tell their stories of their motivation for engaging in further education and training, and their experiences of FET, and how it has enhanced their lives. Following this hugely beneficial training, learners were provided with the opportunity to tell their own story and for it to be recorded in a series of videos.

Key Outcomes/Impacts

The final product was a collection of beautiful videos that were officially launched at LOETB's FET Staff Day in October 2024. During a very moving session, one of the learners involved spoke to an audience of over 300 FET staff about the literacy challenges she faced all her life and how she overcame them, with the support of LOETB's Adult Literacy Service. This lady's video, and those of her peers, had a profound effect on the staff team.

This initiative has been nominated for an AONTAS Star award which is a great achievement for all involved.

Key Learnings

We are very aware that hearing learner stories from the learners themselves is more meaningful and effective than through data about levels of satisfaction. Qualitative data provides a much more complete picture of the learner experience.

6.0 Follow-Up Report Survey

(This section will not be published)

Please complete a short survey in relation to the Follow Up Reporting **process** using this link.