

CONSULTATION ON

Draft Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines on Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning



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agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann**
Quality and
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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSULTATION

BACKGROUND

Work-integrated learning is an integral feature of many programmes currently offered in the Irish further and higher education and training systems. Its success depends on the quality of a wide range of factors and inputs including the pedagogical design; the selection and preparation of the learning activities, environments and partners; and the supervision and support provided to learners. From a quality assurance (QA) perspective, where entities external to the education provider are involved in supporting the acquisition or assessment of learning (e.g. by hosting work experience or practice placements; the on-the-job elements of apprenticeship; or collaborating on work-related projects), this adds an additional level of complexity. For education providers, ensuring the quality of these dimensions of a programme, the consistency of standards and the validity and reliability of assessment across potentially multiple such external partners can pose particular challenges.

In recognition of this, QQI has included a commitment in its current [Statement of Strategy](#) to develop topic-specific statutory quality assurance guidelines to support the design, delivery, evaluation and enhancement of programmes that involve work-integrated learning and related qualifications.

The draft guidelines have been informed by the findings of a series of engagements undertaken with stakeholders to understand the types of work-integrated learning currently in operation in the tertiary system and what stakeholders consider to be the priorities for the development of statutory quality assurance guidelines in this space. The conclusions of those engagements have been published in two reports: [Work-integrated Learning Practice in Ireland](#) and [Quality Assuring Work-integrated Learning in Irish Tertiary Education](#).

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE DRAFT GUIDELINES

The draft guidelines are intended to supplement QQI's [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#), addressing specific responsibilities for the quality assurance of programmes involving work-integrated learning.

The draft guidelines apply to the integration of planned learning activities within a programme of education and training that involve the meaningful practice of work and which are delivered in conjunction with a workplace partner¹. The language of “work-integrated learning” (as opposed, for example, to the term “work-based learning”, which may be more widely used within the sector) is intended to emphasise the role of workplace-related learning as an intentional element *integrated* within a coherent programme of education and training and the particular quality assurance considerations arising.

As a well-known form of work-integrated learning, the draft guidelines will apply to apprenticeship. The existing [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#) continue to apply in respect of considerations specific to statutory apprenticeship programmes.

¹ Defined in the guidelines as encompassing individuals or organisations external to the education provider that are involved in providing opportunities for work-integrated learning (e.g. an organisation that hosts a learner undertaking work experience or a practice placement; in an apprenticeship context, an employer; an organisation that engages with the education provider on an industry project etc.).

IMPLEMENTATION

The guidelines provide a quality assurance framework for the development and delivery of programmes that involve work-integrated learning. Not all of the guidelines will apply to every provider or programme. A fundamental principle of QQI's quality assurance framework is that the "primary responsibility for quality and its assurance lies with education and training providers"². Providers will therefore need to consider how the guidelines may be used to inform the development, adoption, maintenance or enhancement of their own, contextually-specific, QA procedures.

Implementation of the guidelines by providers will be monitored through routine quality reporting and review engagements with QQI.

For providers of QQI awards, the introduction of the guidelines will not necessitate a change to scope of provision. Work-integrated learning is not currently specified as one of the dimensions of scope of provision but is considered as part of QQI's programme validation and provider approval, monitoring and review processes.

Following the consultation process, QQI plans to publish the final version of the guidelines in early 2026. It is intended that the guidelines will be accompanied by multimedia resources for learners and external partners, highlighting the key aspects of the guidelines. QQI will also consider the need for additional resources (such as case study material etc.) to support the implementation of the guidelines.

CONSULTATION

The consultation on the draft guidelines will be open until **17 October 2025**.

We would particularly welcome views on the following:

1. Is the terminology used in the consultation sufficiently clear (e.g. are there any terms that are ambiguous or require further clarification)?
2. Are there any quality assurance considerations relevant to work-integrated learning that are missing or not adequately addressed?
3. Are the guidelines relating to assessment sufficient to reflect the various purposes of assessment (e.g. formative/summative etc.) and the particular quality assurance considerations arising in work-integrated learning contexts?
4. Do the proposed guidelines relating to complaints and appeals by learners adequately respond to the differing learning environments and statuses of learners encompassed within the guidelines?
5. How compatible are the draft guidelines with the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes?

Consultation responses may be submitted using our [online response form](#) or emailed to consultation@qqi.ie, including "Draft Guidelines on Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning" in the subject line.

² See [QQI's Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines](#).



**TOPIC
SPECIFIC**

Draft Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines on Programmes involving Work-integrated Learning

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines topic-specific statutory guidelines for the quality assurance (QA) of programmes involving work-integrated learning.

Under section 27(6) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) may issue different QA guidelines for different classes of programmes or different types of provision. All provision, including for work-integrated learning, is underpinned by the general principles of quality assurance and enhancement set out in QQI's [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#), as well as other relevant topic-specific and sector-specific guidelines. These statutory topic-specific guidelines supplement the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, addressing specific responsibilities for the quality assurance of programmes involving work-integrated learning.

SCOPE

In the context of these guidelines, QQI defines work-integrated learning as:

- The integration of planned learning activities within a programme of education and training that involve the meaningful practice of work, and which are delivered in conjunction with a workplace partner. These activities are designed to support work-integrated learning within the programme and can take a variety of forms (e.g. internships, placements, the on-the-job components of apprenticeships, projects for industry etc.). They may take place entirely in a work setting (including online, in the workplace, in the community), entirely within an education provider, or a combination of both.
- Such activities may constitute a small or very significant proportion of the programme and it is possible that multiple such activities are included in the programme and over different stages of a programme.

Within this, QQI defines:

‘Learning’ as incorporating teaching and assessment, which both support and validate learning.

‘Workplace partner’ as encompassing individuals or organisations external to the education provider that are involved in providing opportunities for work-integrated learning (e.g. an organisation that hosts a learner undertaking work experience or a practice placement; in an apprenticeship context, an employer; an organisation that engages with the education provider on an industry project etc.).

An important feature of this definition for providers to consider is that work-integrated learning requires the direct involvement of at least three stakeholders³:

- An education provider
- A learner
- A workplace partner

³ In some contexts, additional external stakeholders such as professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) may also be involved in designing, assessing or accrediting programmes that involve work-integrated learning.

QQI previously developed a set of [topic-specific QA guidelines for providers of statutory apprenticeship programmes](#). As a well-known form of work-integrated learning, apprenticeship is also within the scope of these guidelines.

These guidelines do **not** encompass:

- forms of applied, authentic or industry-relevant learning and assessment that occur in contexts where a workplace partner is not directly involved
- the assessment or recognition of learning as part of recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes. Whilst RPL processes can involve assessment of learning acquired in a work setting, these guidelines are intended to apply to the acquisition of learning in a planned manner as part of a programme of education or training

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES?

These guidelines are intended to support the quality assurance and enhancement of programmes that involve work-integrated learning and thus the provision of appropriate teaching, learning and assessment experiences for learners engaged in these programmes.

Providers will have regard to the guidelines to inform the establishment (including amendment) of their quality assurance procedures for programmes that involve work-integrated learning. It is anticipated that such procedures will be proportionate to the nature, scale and complexity of their programmes or future aspirations. This point recognises that not all of the guidelines will be applicable to all providers, especially smaller providers, and will depend on the types of work-integrated learning in use.

The guidelines are to be used by providers when establishing, developing, implementing, evaluating, maintaining, or reviewing quality assurance procedures.

The objectives of the guidelines are to:

- support the design, provision, evaluation and enhancement of programmes that involve work-integrated learning and related qualifications
- provide quality assurance guidance to support clarity with regard to the roles and responsibilities of education providers, learners and other stakeholders involved in work-integrated learning
- provide guidance on risk management and contingency planning in the context of programmes that involve work-integrated learning
- support the provision of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment for all learners engaged in work-integrated learning
- provide guidance on ensuring equity of access and participation in work-integrated learning for our diverse learner populations and the provision of appropriate measures to support their success
- support the determination and implementation of standards (knowledge, skill and especially competence) by education providers and assessment against those standards

- support the use of credit in the context of learning activities that draw upon work or practice
- enhance the quality and academic integrity of awards achieved through work-integrated learning
- enhance understanding of expectations and the mutual benefit arising from work-integrated learning for learner, education provider and other stakeholders
- support education providers, learners and other stakeholders to design and implement innovative programmes that involve work-integrated learning, which are responsive to evolving contexts of education and training provision and labour market/societal needs
- future-proof the provision and quality assurance of programmes that involve work-integrated learning so that they are reflective of, and responsive to, changing environments in education, training and the workplace; and are sufficiently flexible to enable all stakeholders to adapt to emerging opportunities and challenges

TO WHOM DO THESE GUIDELINES APPLY?

These guidelines are applicable to the following, who must have regard to them in the development of their internal QA procedures:

- Designated awarding bodies
- Education and training boards, SOLAS and Teagasc
- Independent or private providers of higher, further, and English language education programmes who come voluntarily to QQI to seek approval of their QA procedures or access to QQI awards
- Listed awarding bodies that seek inclusion of their awards within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Associated providers
- Linked providers

As set out in QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines, quality assurance procedures include provision for engagement with external partnerships and second providers. Quality assurance procedures cover all such arrangements, including sub-contracting of provision, research or other partnerships in programme or research provision, or related services, both at home and abroad as appropriate.

Providers offering programmes that involve work-integrated learning that do not lead to an award included within the NFQ, are encouraged to be guided by the expectations and quality considerations captured here. Similarly, workplace partners (although not regulated by QQI) are encouraged to refer to the guidelines in the context of their collaborations with providers of education and training programmes. Workplace partners play an important role in the quality assurance of work-integrated learning and the invaluable contribution that work-integrated learning makes to developing the employability of learners and graduates across Ireland's tertiary sector.

CONTEXT

The term work-integrated learning is not consistently used in all tertiary education settings in Ireland. However, the practices associated with work-integrated learning are well-established across the national tertiary education landscape (see, for example, Sheridan & Linehan, 2011⁴; O'Neill, 2022⁵) and are referenced in the public information of many tertiary education providers. The practice of work-integrated learning also aligns closely with the focus and objectives of national policy relevant to education, training and skills.

The definition of work-integrated learning that underpins these guidelines encompasses a breadth of diverse practices. This acknowledges that there is a future-oriented need for innovative, contemporary and evolving practices in work-integrated learning in the Irish tertiary landscape, extending beyond traditionally dominant models of placement. This is an important consideration in light of the difficulties identified by learners in finding placement opportunities. Reflection on this is further warranted in the context of upskilling programmes and provision designed for mature or part-time learners where placement formats may be considered less appropriate.

The broader landscape of practices entailed in work-integrated learning are the subject of multiple typologies across the international literature. For example, Jackson and Dean (2022⁶) have undertaken a large-scale study on the impact of work-integrated learning using three broad types: work-based, non-workplace and global. A different, but similarly high-level approach has been proposed by Kaider et al (2017⁷), who have proposed a typology of work-integrated learning activities and assessments utilising two axes: authenticity (the extent to which learners work on problems, processes and projects they may encounter in their professions) and proximity (the extent to which experiences occur in real workplaces and professional contexts, enabling learners to interact with practitioners or community members). Other frameworks characterise work-integrated learning by 'type'. For example, [Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada \(CEWIL\)](#) propose nine types of work-integrated learning, including community and industry research and projects, community service learning and entrepreneurship, among others.

In the Irish context, there is variance and fluidity in the terminology used by education and training providers and practitioners to describe the forms of work-integrated learning with which they are engaged. This may derive from local vocational or disciplinary norms or potentially be adopted from other sources, such as institutional or practitioner engagement with international communities of practice and membership organisations for work-integrated learning⁸. These guidelines, which are intended to be broadly relevant and used contextually by relevant providers, do not require terminological conformity: rather, stakeholders are encouraged to reflect on how the guidelines may apply to and be incorporated within their own contexts and practices.

4 Sheridan, I. & Linehan, M. (2011) *Work Placement in Third-Level Programmes. Roadmap for Employment – Academic Partnerships (REAP)*. Cork: CIT Press. Retrieved from: <https://www.cit.ie/contentfiles/extended/Work-Placement-Report-2011.pdf>

5 O'Neill, G. (2022) Assessing work-integrated learning: developing solutions to the challenges of authenticity and consistency. National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Retrieved from: <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Insight-Geraldine-O'Neill.pdf>

6 Jackson, D., & Dean, B. A. (2022) 'The contribution of different types of work-integrated learning to graduate employability', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(1), pp. 93–110. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2048638>

7 Kaider, F., Hains-Wesson, R. & Young, K. (2017) 'Practical typology of authentic work-integrated learning activities and assessments', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, Special Issue, 18 (2), pp. 153-165.

8 Influential international communities of practice include the [World Association of Cooperative and Work-integrated Education \(WACE\)](#), the [Work Based Learning and Placement Learning Association UK \(ASET\)](#) or [Work Integrated Learning Australia](#) (formerly Australian Collaborative Education Network) among others.

HOW THESE GUIDELINES ARE STRUCTURED

These guidelines are presented under three subheadings:

- The Provider Context
- The Programme Context
- The Learner Context

These contexts are interconnected and many aspects of quality assurance need to be addressed at each level. For example, equity of access and participation and the promotion of inclusion, ethical standards and upholding academic integrity are relevant at all levels. This results in natural overlaps and interdependencies throughout the guidelines, which are intentional.

1. PROVIDER CONTEXT

The guidelines in this section focus on aspects of the quality assurance of work-integrated learning that are provider-wide in scope. They encompass the alignment of work-integrated learning with the provider's strategic objectives as well as the implications of work-integrated learning for the governance and the management of quality assurance. It is necessary for a provider's wider QA framework to have policies and procedures in place that demonstrably support the types of work-integrated learning it provides. At an organisational level, quality assurance of work-integrated learning includes measures to identify, measure and mitigate risk, as well as a consideration of the resourcing, infrastructure and capacity (including staff capacity and expertise) that work-integrated learning provision requires.

Providers operating programmes that involve work-integrated learning have a responsibility to engage with workplace partners, learners and other external stakeholders in quality assurance processes and to manage shared responsibilities or dependencies that may arise. In some contexts, the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), apprenticeship consortia and other relevant accrediting bodies also need to be considered. An important consideration for providers is the careful management of these relationships and ensuring the requirements of all stakeholders are met.

1.1 PROVIDER CONTEXT GUIDELINES

1.1.1 Strategic Alignment

Work-integrated learning provision aligns within the provider's overall strategic objectives.

- The contribution that work-integrated learning provision makes to the provider's broader strategic objectives and the value of its programmes of education and training is explicit and understood by both internal and external stakeholders, including workplace partners and learners.
- The implications of work-integrated learning are considered within organisational planning and resource allocation processes.

1.1.2 The Provider's Internal Quality Assurance System

The provider's internal QA system fully accounts for the context and profile of its work-integrated learning provision.

- There are provisions for the review of the provider's QA system and identification of measures to address any areas where existing QA may not be effective or applicable to the context of work-integrated learning. These include (but are not limited to):
 - programme design, development and approval. For example, where relevant, procedures adequately reflect and are appropriate to the types of work-integrated learning (e.g. placement, project, apprenticeship etc.) contained within the programme; the nature of the work-integrated learning partnership and relationship management strategies; legal and risk management matters; the volume of work and allocation of credit; as well as the nature and extent of workplace partner or industry/sector representative involvement in the programme design and development

- approval of non-classroom-based learning environments. For example, where relevant, procedures encompass criteria and processes for approving placements, workplace partners, venues, staff or mentors. QA policies reflect academic oversight of mechanisms for approving learning environments and the criteria against which they are evaluated. Policies and procedures reflect contingency measures in cases where a learning environment becomes unsuitable or no longer available
- staff recruitment, management and development. For example, where relevant, QA policies and procedures reflect the involvement of workplace partner personnel undertaking a role in supporting, mentoring or assessing learners
- learner supports. For example, where relevant, QA policies and procedures reflect mechanisms for providing support to learners in diverse and dynamic environments. Other learner support requirements specific to work-integrated learning may include preparatory supports (including cultural and emotional preparation), mechanisms to ensure ongoing availability of academic and pastoral support for learners engaging in remote and workplace-based activities, and mechanisms for managing issues that may arise for such learners
- teaching and learning. For example, where relevant, QA policies and procedures, including processes for reviewing the learning experience and the suitability of learning environments, facilities and resources, account for the breadth of work-integrated learning environments utilised and their suitability for diverse learners
- assessment. For example, where relevant, QA policies and procedures reflect varied models of assessment moderation and the potentially differing roles (e.g. of external examiners or authenticators) in the context of programmes involving work-integrated learning. Regulations associated with repeat assessment, and the availability of opportunities to complete repeat assessment during the traditional repeat period, may require special consideration. QA may also need to reflect specific arrangements in instances where assessment material submitted by learners is subject to a non-disclosure agreement or the confidentiality requirements of the workplace partner
- collaborative provision arrangements. For example, where relevant, policies and procedures reflect the various processes in place for defining, approving and monitoring the parameters of collaborative partner responsibilities and workplace partner responsibilities. Policies on information and data management specify the data sharing requirements, limitations and processes associated with any collaborative delivery of work-integrated learning
- self-monitoring and review. For example, where relevant, monitoring and review processes recognise the role of workplace partners/industry or sector representatives as equal partners or co-creators in quality review and enhancement processes
- The QA system of the provider includes mechanisms for oversight of compliance with any professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements for work-integrated learning provision.
- QA procedures for the design, development, approval, operation, monitoring and review of programmes that involve work-integrated learning are developed, embedded, maintained and reviewed with the meaningful involvement of all relevant stakeholders. At a minimum, this should involve relevant internal staff of the provider (including academic, professional and support staff), workplace partners and learners. It may also involve other external stakeholders, for example workplace partners, apprenticeship consortia or PSRBs.

- Mechanisms are in place within the provider's QA system to progress corrective actions, adjustments to processes or implement enhancement plans in collaboration with workplace partners for work-integrated learning programmes.
- There are mechanisms in place to facilitate equity of access and participation and promote inclusion in the specific context of the provider's work-integrated learning provision.
 - A commitment to reducing barriers to learner participation and success is integral to the provider's QA of work-integrated learning provision.
 - Equity of access and participation and the promotion of inclusion are visible components of any values statements, codes of conduct, agreements and other documentation relevant to work-integrated learning shared with workplace partners.
 - There are mechanisms in place to promote awareness and ongoing learning regarding accessible physical and online environments, and inclusive education and work practices for all relevant stakeholders, including workplace partners.
 - Equity of access and participation and the promotion of inclusion are focal within processes including (but not limited to) those relating to:
 - programme design;
 - work-integrated teaching, learning and assessment;
 - the selection and approval of workplace partners;
 - information and supports for learners.
- General processes for the needs assessment of learners with disabilities by providers actively consider the demands of work-integrated learning as part of their wider assessment.
- Complaints and appeal procedures are accessible and available to all relevant stakeholders. The general complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures of the provider account for the context of work-integrated learning.
 - Providers have mechanisms in place for both learners and workplace partners to make informal and formal complaints.
 - Learners have access to procedures for making appeals against any relevant decisions taken by the provider, for example, regarding their fitness to practice or the outcomes of disciplinary procedures.
 - Workplace partners hosting or employing learners in their physical or online work environments should have procedures available to learners who wish to raise complaints or grievances in relation to their learning experience.
 - Any specific implications for progression or professional accreditation arising from unsuccessful completion of work-integrated stages, modules or components of programmes (for example, if a learner wins a disciplinary appeal but has not been able to complete a placement) are clearly defined (see 3.1.1 Learner Information).
- There are objective criteria and robust, fit-for-purpose processes for evaluating, as appropriate, the reputation, legal status and standing (including, where relevant, professional and general regulatory compliance and appropriate insurance) of workplace partners, and any such relevant considerations where workplace partners are situated internationally.

1.1.3 Academic Oversight

There are clearly defined governance structures embedded within the provider's internal quality assurance system that provide appropriate academic oversight of the provider's work-integrated learning provision.

- The academic oversight functions within the provider draw upon suitably qualified and sufficiently experienced expertise⁹. This encompasses (but is not limited to) persons providing objective advice on programme development, implementation, monitoring and review.
- There are mechanisms in place for ensuring that expectations surrounding ethical conduct and the professional and academic standards to be upheld are explicitly stated and agreed by all relevant stakeholders.
 - Providers articulate clear and unambiguous statements regarding the core values underpinning their work-integrated learning provision to workplace partners, learners and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Expectations for the ethical conduct of all parties in the specific context of work-integrated learning and guidance on matters of professional and academic integrity, including in the specific context of assessment, are explicitly stated within relevant agreements, guidance documents or codes of conduct.

1.1.4 Resourcing and Capacity

The provider has mechanisms for providing oversight of resourcing and capacity for work-integrated learning provision. There is ongoing monitoring to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes.

- The provider ensures that the systems, infrastructure and supports needed to enable quality assured work-integrated learning provision in line with strategic objectives and programme requirements are in place. There is oversight and ongoing monitoring of the allocation of adequate and fit-for-purpose resources (human and physical, including digital infrastructure) to work-integrated learning provision.
 - Particular consideration is given to the resources required to establish and manage relationships with workplace partners at the scale required to support the provider's work-integrated learning provision.
 - The provider supports participation by staff in communities of practice related to work-integrated learning.
- The provider's internal capacity assessments routinely consider the specific requirements of its work-integrated learning provision and use these to inform costings, decision-making, planning and resource allocation.

⁹ Where necessary, this may need to be external expertise.

1.1.5 Risk and Compliance

The specific context of work-integrated learning is considered within the provider's wider processes for risk identification, management and mitigation.

- The provider routinely considers academic, commercial, operational and reputational risks associated with its work-integrated learning provision.
 - Direction and guidance are provided, as appropriate, to programme teams on the necessary parameters of evaluation of workplace partners and risk assessments for specific contexts of provision.
 - There are systems and processes for assessing the compliance of workplace partners with general regulatory requirements, including, where relevant, having appropriate insurances in place.
 - Procedures are in place for identifying, mitigating, monitoring and responding to risks and taking all reasonable measures to ensure that work-integrated learning environments are safe, including, where relevant, international environments.

2. PROGRAMME CONTEXT

In this section, guidelines are provided for aspects of quality assurance that need to be considered in the design, development and approval of specific programmes that involve work-integrated learning as well as their operation and monitoring. They encompass the necessary alignment between the rationale for a programme, its minimum intended learning outcomes and the planned teaching, learning and assessment strategies, including types of work-integrated learning. In this context, processes need to be in place to ensure the meaningful and appropriate involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including workplace partners and learners, in the design, development and quality assurance of a programme. The guidelines also identify the need to consider, with reference to specific programme requirements, the suitability of work-integrated learning environments and the selection of workplace partners.

An important consideration at the programme level is the extent to which the programme is designed to reduce barriers to participation and promote flexibility and inclusion. This may impact the access, transfer and progression arrangements for the programme, and encompass specific arrangements relevant to PSRB or other awarding body requirements.

2.1 PROGRAMME CONTEXT GUIDELINES

2.1.1 Programme Rationale, Learning Outcomes and Credit

The rationale for the inclusion of work-integrated learning in the programme is explicit. Work-integrated learning is reflected in the programme's intended learning outcomes and the allocation of academic credit.

- The documented rationale for the programme explains the role that work-integrated learning plays in the overall programme design, referring as appropriate to the target learners, the minimum intended learning outcomes and any additional or specific requirements of PSRBs or other accreditation bodies.
- The contribution that work-integrated learning makes to a learner's achievement in a programme is clearly reflected in the minimum intended learning outcomes of the programme, and, where relevant, the minimum intended learning outcomes associated with stages, modules or components of the programme.
 - The minimum intended learning outcomes identify the knowledge, skill and competence learners are expected to develop through participating in work-integrated learning. The achievement of those outcomes is demonstrated in the programme's assessment strategy.
 - The minimum intended learning outcomes of the programme are demonstrably aligned with relevant award standards, the NFAQ, and in the case of apprenticeships, with relevant occupational profiles.
 - Where relevant, the minimum intended learning outcomes of the programme are aligned with the additional or specific requirements of PSRBs or other awarding bodies.
 - In some instances, the requirements of PSRBs or other awarding bodies require learning outcomes to be tightly coupled with the assessment of highly specific

competencies. This does not negate the need to demonstrate alignment with relevant award standards and the NFQ.

- The assigning of academic credit to components that involve work or practice reflects the intended learning outcomes and includes consideration of the expected learner workload.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Involvement in Programme Design and Approval

The design, development and approval of programmes that involve work-integrated learning meaningfully involve all relevant stakeholders.

- There is meaningful involvement in the design, development and approval of programmes that involve work-integrated learning of relevant internal staff of the provider (including academic, professional and support staff), workplace partners and learners, as well as other external stakeholders where appropriate (for example, apprenticeship consortia or PSRBs).
 - The extent of workplace partner and external stakeholder involvement is determined in a manner that is appropriate to the programme and the volume, duration and type of work-integrated learning that is planned. Involvement may mean co-design and ownership of a programme (for example, in the context of apprenticeships) or it may be realised through other proportionate forms of collaboration and consultation.
 - Not all PSRBs engage directly in the programme design, development or approval activity of providers. In such cases, the use of PSRB guidelines or criteria may be relevant.

2.1.3 Reducing Barriers

The design, development and approval processes for programmes that involve work-integrated learning entail systematic consideration of how barriers to participation and success in workplace-based learning activities can be reduced.

- This should include (but not be limited to) careful analysis of the entry requirements and recruitment processes, structure, scheduling and duration, workload commitment, supports and delivery methods proposed for the programme.
- Consideration is given to how unnecessary barriers may be removed or flexibility offered to learners in respect of workplace-based learning activities (e.g. part-time or remote engagement), particularly for learners with a disability, who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, who are mature, who are studying part-time or who may be subject to various forms of social bias or discrimination.
- Consideration is given to the arrangements for the identification of workplace partners (including recognition of the challenges some learners may face in sourcing such partners directly).
- Consideration is given to alternatives, where appropriate, to placement-based forms of work-integrated learning.

2.1.4 Access, Transfer and Progression (and Professional Registrations)

The access, transfer and progression arrangements for programmes that involve work-integrated learning are clearly specified and communicated to learners. The role of the programme in preparing or qualifying learners for professional registration or practice in a specific field is clearly defined.

- Consideration should be given at the point of programme design to the options and potential outcomes for learners who may be unable to commence or successfully complete modules or components of a programme involving work-integrated learning.
 - Programme information should include specification of any special conditions for progression within the programme. It should also clarify whether there are any alternatives to attempting or passing particular elements or components and, if so, specify what these may be.
 - Programme information should also include specification of exit awards and transfer options (where these are available).
- Any specific requirements of PSRBs or other awarding bodies that have implications for the admissions and progression requirements of programmes involving work-integrated learning should be clearly specified and communicated to learners.
 - In particular, the relationship between successful completion of a specified stage, module or component of the programme and any professional registration or recognition should be clearly outlined.

2.1.5 Principled Curriculum Design (including Teaching, Learning and Assessment)

Curriculum design and learning design reflects a systematic and planned approach to work-integrated teaching, learning and assessment that is contextually appropriate, inclusive and principled.

- The design of work-integrated teaching, learning and assessment takes account of the intended learning outcomes at different stages of the programme, as appropriate.
 - This may, for example, mean that learners are exposed to highly structured or classroom-based forms of work-integrated learning early in their programme, and progress to more immersive or intensive forms of work-integrated learning in later stages.
- The learning design integrates the preparation, scaffolding and supports required for learners engaging in specific types of work-integrated learning and/or progressing to distinct stages of a programme.
- The rationale for the inclusion of specific types (for example, simulations, challenges, projects or placements) of work-integrated learning at different stages of a programme is clearly defined. The work-integrated learning incorporated in the programme:
 - is purposefully considered and (where relevant) sequenced to support achievement of the minimum intended learning outcomes relevant to the stage, module, component and/or programme
 - is preceded, where appropriate, by preparatory learning or activities embedded within the programme that are designed to support learner success in the context of work-integrated learning

- is maximised, where appropriate, through being leveraged in reflective, peer, evaluative or career development learning activities.
- provides opportunities for learners to engage with current and evolving professional or workplace practices, norms and trends
- The summative and formative assessment of work-integrated learning:
 - promote and support effective learning and teaching in all of the learning environments in which the learner is engaged
 - are appropriate to the specific nature of the learning and demonstrate achievement of relevant minimum intended learning outcomes
 - are co-designed with appropriate input from workplace partners, external stakeholders such as apprenticeship consortia or PSRBs, alumni and learners
 - are relevant to the applied and practice-oriented nature of work-integrated learning
 - are designed with careful consideration of the challenges associated with achieving consistency in the assessment of learners across the variable environments and locations in which work-integrated learning may take place.

2.1.6 Arrangements for Assessment

Specific arrangements for the assessment of work-integrated learning are clearly documented. Information is provided to all relevant stakeholders, including learners, about how the assessment of work-integrated learning is carried out, who carries out the assessment, how grades are determined and how assessment is quality assured.

- Clearly documented information is provided to all relevant stakeholders regarding assessment formats and schedules, as well as any criteria that will be used to evaluate the learner's performance. This includes:
 - the responsibilities of all stakeholders engaged in the assessment process
 - grading criteria, marking rubrics (and rationale)
 - grade descriptors
 - moderation arrangements
 - academic integrity considerations
 - provision for reasonable accommodations in assessment
- The authority, role, responsibility and accountability of all persons involved with carrying out assessment of work-integrated learning stages, modules or components of the programme are clearly defined and documented. Particular attention is paid to the role and contribution of the following in evaluating learner performance and determining grades:
 - workplace partner staff
 - external examiners or authenticators
 - any other relevant external stakeholders
- Assessment procedures for programmes involving work-integrated learning interface with the established processes for ensuring the validity, reliability, integrity and inclusiveness of assessment within the provider¹⁰.

¹⁰ Whilst PSRB or other awarding body requirements may require learning outcomes (and their assessment) to be tightly coupled to the demonstration of specific competencies, this does not preclude consideration of relevant provider policies and procedures governing the quality assurance of assessment.

- Where assessment procedures for work-integrated learning deviate from standard assessment regulations, this is explicitly communicated to all stakeholders, including learners.
- Work-integrated learning assessments are secure, confidential and compliant with applicable data protection and freedom of information legislation.

2.1.7 Documented Roles and Responsibilities

The contractual basis of the relationship between the learner, the workplace partner and the provider¹¹ is clearly defined and documented for all parties.

- Clear and documented information is available to learners, workplace partners and provider staff that details, in the context of specific work-integrated learning opportunities, the contractual basis of relationships between:
 1. The learner and the workplace partner
 2. The workplace partner and the provider
 3. The learner and the provider

Within this:

- There are documented, well-defined and agreed designated roles and responsibilities for work-integrated learning for all stakeholders, who include, but are not limited to, the education provider, learners and workplace partners.
 - Roles and responsibilities may be documented and agreed in formats including (but not limited to) memoranda, shared policies, guidance documents, codes of conduct or their equivalents, as appropriate to the specific context of provision and any associated risk assessments.
 - There are mechanisms in place to facilitate clear communication surrounding responsibilities and accountabilities in the operation of work-integrated provision.
- Responsibility for achieving compliance with any general or contextually-specific legal requirements including (but not limited to) equality legislation, immigration requirements, garda vetting, health and safety requirements or specific certifications is clearly defined and communicated prior to commencement of the programme.
- Responsibility for the provision of needs assessments and the implementation of reasonable accommodations for learners in work-integrated learning is clearly defined and the legal obligations of all parties are communicated.
- The intellectual property rights associated with work undertaken by the learner on behalf of the workplace partner or associated with the learner's use of the patents, trademarks, copyrights or trade secrets of the workplace partner are clearly defined and communicated prior to commencement of the work-integrated learning.
- Any confidentiality, privacy, data protection or non-disclosure requirements of the learner or the workplace partner are clearly defined and communicated to all parties prior to commencement of the work-integrated learning.

¹¹ Where more than one education provider is involved, the roles of each should be explicitly documented and include consideration of any relevant legal or other factors where one or more providers are situated internationally.

- Where relevant, any terms and conditions associated with learner employment and/or remuneration by the workplace partner are defined within contracts of employment (or equivalent). These are provided by the workplace partner to the learner for review and agreement prior to commencement of the work-integrated learning.
- Where relevant, insurances, indemnities and protections from liability are identified within formal agreements.

2.1.8 Consideration of Risk

There are specific mechanisms and criteria in place to mitigate risks to the programme and its learners associated with work-integrated learning provision and the selection of workplace partners.

- Risk assessments for programmes include, where relevant, consideration of:
 - potential risks to learners arising in workplace-based learning environments, including online environments
 - potential risks to the reputation, property or staff of the provider or the workplace partner arising from the inadequate preparation of learners, learner behaviour or learner misconduct
 - potential risks to persons who may be the clients, customers, service users, patients or students of the workplace partner
- There is specific consideration of contingency arrangements in the event of disruption to the planned delivery of work-integrated learning. Where appropriate, programme-level continuity plans are developed in consultation with workplace partners and other relevant stakeholders, such as apprenticeship consortia and PSRBs.
 - Continuity planning may be of particular importance in contexts where the successful completion of work-integrated learning assessments, placements, components or modules are a compulsory requirement for obtaining an award or achieving professional registration.
- Where the programme has received or is awaiting accreditation/approval by a PSRB, there is specific consideration of the risks to learners and contingency arrangements in the event that such accreditation/approval is not achieved or is withdrawn.
- Evaluations and risk assessments are conducted by the provider, its nominees, or other relevant authorities in a manner that:
 - is proportionate to the contribution the workplace partner will make to the provider's work-integrated learning provision
 - is appropriate to the contractual basis of the relationship between the learner and the workplace partner. Risk assessments may vary, for example, according to whether the learner will be considered an employee, a work placement or work experience student hosted in the workplace, or a student interacting with the workplace partner in a supervised classroom environment
 - is aligned with any additional requirements imposed by apprenticeship consortia, PSRBs or other accrediting bodies
 - is not unduly burdensome and does not obscure the purpose of collaborating with the workplace partner

- Opportunities for engaging in work-integrated learning that are directly sourced by learners (such as placement or internship opportunities) are subject to risk assessment and approval by the provider).

2.1.9 Workplace-based Learning Environments

For workplace-based learning, the selection of workplace partners considers their capacity and capability to provide a learning environment in which intended learning outcomes can be achieved, including appropriately qualified mentoring or supervision.

- There are criteria for the recruitment and approval of workplace partners that consider their capacity to provide a suitable work-integrated learning environment in the context of the specific programme.
 - The working environment (whether physical or online) is evaluated to identify whether learners will have the opportunity to apply, develop or demonstrate the knowledge, skill and competence required to achieve intended learning outcomes.
- Physical and online environments where work-integrated learning will occur are evaluated for their accessibility and usability and have mechanisms in place for reporting accessibility barriers.
- The capacity of the workplace partner is assessed. Capacity encompasses the ability to:
 - provide appropriately qualified supervision, mentoring or feedback to learners that is relevant to their learning needs and their development of professional and/or discipline-specific knowledge, skills and competencies as required by the programme
 - provide sufficient supervision, mentoring or feedback to the volume of learners on the programme that the workplace partner hosts or engages with
- It may occur that deficits in the capacity of the workplace partner are identified but the opportunity they provide for work-integrated learning is deemed to be valuable. In such instances, providers should ensure there are mechanisms in place for alternative measures (such as placement rotations or external mentoring) to be enacted so as not to disadvantage individual learners. Any such arrangements should be entered into in full consultation with the relevant learners and workplace partners and fully documented.

2.1.10 Supports for Workplace Partners

Workplace partners and other relevant external stakeholders are supported to fulfil their agreed roles and responsibilities for the programme.

- Relevant information and supports are provided at appropriate junctures to workplace partners and other external stakeholders involved in the mentoring, training, supervision or assessment of learners on programmes involving work-integrated learning. This is particularly important in the context of workplace-based learning. This should include (but not be limited to):
 - the minimum intended learning outcomes to be achieved
 - the role and responsibilities of the learner (including limitations to these)
 - overarching timelines and assessment deadlines

- any specific tasks the learner is required to complete (and timeframes for these)
- the workplace partner's legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities and the arrangements for identifying and implementing any necessary supports
- how the learner will be assessed (including methods and grading criteria)
- who will assess the learner (including distinct roles where relevant)
- measures taken to ensure the validity, reliability, integrity, inclusiveness and security of work-integrated learning assessment
- In the context of workplace-based learning supervised by a workplace partner, the following may also be relevant:
 - any time allocations that should be provided to the learner to facilitate completion of assessment
 - any records that should be maintained regarding the learner's assessment or general performance
 - any access to specific resources or equipment the learner will require
- Where appropriate, additional guidance should be provided to workplace partners to enhance their capacity to facilitate work-integrated learning and encourage their active contribution to the learning process. This may include (but not be limited to):
 - providing induction of learners in the workplace (where relevant)
 - specific training or credentialing for workplace partner staff and other stakeholders involved in the mentoring, training, supervision or assessment of learners, e.g. mentoring or supervisory skills
 - provision of formative feedback

2.1.11 Programme Staff

Programme staff involved in the development or implementation of the programme involving work-integrated learning are sufficient in numbers, appropriately qualified and are supported to engage in continuing professional development specific to the context of work-integrated learning.

- There are sufficient personnel in place to adequately support, supervise and assess work-integrated learning and to monitor its effectiveness.
 - There is consideration of both provider and workplace partner staff capacity within any formal agreements, guidance documents or codes of conduct.
- Programme staff of the provider, workplace partners and any other relevant persons with agreed roles or responsibilities for the development or implementation of programmes involving work-integrated learning are sufficiently qualified.
 - Objective criteria should be established to ensure that programme staff of the provider, workplace partners and any other relevant persons with agreed roles or responsibilities (for example, contributing to the design of programmes involving work-integrated learning or the supervision, assessment and support of learners) are sufficiently qualified and experienced.
 - Staff without relevant experience of work-integrated learning provision are provided with appropriate induction and training following their appointment.

- All programme staff are encouraged to engage in communities of practice and other forms of professional development relevant to the context of work-integrated learning and to contribute to continual enhancement and innovation in practice.
- Workplace partner staff involved in assessment engage in appropriate professional development to develop their understanding of assessment standards and regulations.

2.1.12 Stakeholder Communication

There are established processes for ongoing communication between provider programme staff, the learner and workplace partner staff as well as other relevant external stakeholders.

- Learners, workplace partners and programme staff have clear information about the points of contact available to them in the context of work-integrated learning and are provided with relevant contact details.
 - Channels for communication are agreed, are readily accessible, and assurances of confidentiality are provided where appropriate.
- Where relevant, and particularly in the context of workplace-based learning supervised by a workplace partner, there are routine or scheduled communications and interactions between the programme team and the workplace partners or other external stakeholders involved in the mentoring, training, supervision or assessment of learners.
- In contexts where learners are hosted by the workplace partner, mechanisms are in place to maintain ongoing communication between:
 - the learner and the provider
 - the workplace partner and the provider

2.1.13 Programme Monitoring and Review

There are mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of work-integrated learning programmes and adherence to documented and agreed distribution of relevant stakeholder responsibilities.

- The processes for programme monitoring and review encompass the effectiveness of work-integrated learning stages, modules or components, particularly their teaching, learning and assessment.
- Programme monitoring and review encompasses the adherence of all relevant stakeholders to any relevant agreements, codes of conduct or other forms of guidance and any implications for adjustments needed to those documents.
- Feedback on programmes is routinely collected from learners, workplace partners and provider staff. Stakeholder feedback and other appropriate indicators of effectiveness are systematically reviewed.

3. LEARNER EXPERIENCE CONTEXT

The guidelines in this section focus on the learner experience and ensuring the learner is appropriately informed, supported and prepared for work-integrated learning. They also emphasise the importance for learners of having equitable access to work-integrated learning that occurs in accessible, safe and inclusive environments. The guidelines reinforce the importance of mechanisms that facilitate learner feedback, input and representation. These seek to ensure that the essential contribution of the learner voice is central to the quality assurance of work-integrated learning.

3.1 LEARNER EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES

3.1.1 Learner Information

Prospective learners are comprehensively informed regarding the requirements of the programme and are equipped to make informed choices.

- Prospective learners are fully informed regarding the requirements of programmes that involve work-integrated learning prior to application and enrolment. Descriptions of the work-integrated learning stages, modules or components of the programme are unambiguous and provide information, at a minimum, regarding:
 - type/s of work-integrated learning (for example, project or placement)
 - location/s (for example, workplace-based, classroom-based or online)
 - duration
 - minimum intended learning outcomes
 - whether specific elements are compulsory (and any alternative pathways)
 - additional requirements associated with participating in work-integrated learning, including, for each instance in the programme:
 - time, timing and duration
 - travel (and potential associated expenses)
 - whether learners are required to, or may, source their own opportunities (for example, for placement or internship)
 - whether any elements will be remunerated
 - whether participation is conditional to immigration, vetting or other requirements
 - the availability of any provider supports specific to sourcing or participating in work-integrated learning
 - the availability of reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities participating in work-integrated learning.
 - credit and assessment weightings in relation to the various elements of the programme or the stage/module/component
 - information on how work-integrated learning will be assessed and any deviation from the provider's standard assessment regulations

- whether any fitness-to-practise processes (e.g. prior health and safety, manual handling requirements etc.) are a prerequisite to participation in work-integrated learning, and, if so, the nature of those processes
- Any PSRB or awarding body requirements associated with a programme involving work-integrated learning or specific stages, modules or components, including:
 - the accreditation/approval status of the programme
 - any conditions associated with the professional accreditation or recognition of the programme for entry to professional practice
 - where a programme has not yet achieved accreditation/approval, associated risks and options for learners
 - any involvement of the PSRB or awarding body in the operation or assessment of work-integrated learning
- Enrolled learners are provided with specific information about their role, responsibilities, legal status and working conditions (including remuneration and time commitments) prior to commencement of any workplace-based types of work-integrated learning.

3.1.2 Learner Supports

In addition to the availability of the provider's established supports for learners, specific supports relevant to the context of work-integrated learning are available.

- Learners are provided with supports and learning resources that are appropriate to the specific requirements and demands of work-integrated learning.
- Where learners with a disability require reasonable accommodations in the context of work-integrated learning, processes are in place for learners to disclose their disability and make requests for reasonable accommodation.
- In cases where work-integrated learning is primarily located in physical or online/remote workplace environments, consideration is given to how learners will have ongoing access to identified and available contacts within the academic provider.
 - Learners will have access to academic and administrative programme staff to debrief, seek specific supports or discuss/raise concerns.
 - Learners will have access to equivalent mental health support and wellbeing services and pastoral care as are available to on-campus learners.
 - Learners will have access to equivalent learning support and technical services as are available to on-campus learners.
- In contexts where learners participate in workplace-based types of work-integrated learning of significant duration (for example, placements or internships), or in the case of apprenticeships, where learners spend a large proportion of their time 'on-the-job', consideration is given to opportunities for learners to maintain a sense of connectedness with peers and programme teaching staff while in the workplace.

3.1.3 Learner Preparation and Debriefing

Learners are adequately prepared to participate in work-integrated learning and have opportunities to debrief that maximise potential learning.

- Learners are appropriately prepared prior to commencing work-integrated learning. Preparation is tailored and proportionate to the type of work-integrated learning and accounts for the specific context of the discipline or profession.
 - Preparation is not purely information-based but involves learning, and may include, for example simulations, role plays, engaging with video or multimedia materials and engaging in reflection.
- Where relevant, preparation activities encompass:
 - practicalities and planning
 - practicing specific workplace skills (including technical skills)
 - ethical and professional standards, including consideration of cultural norms
 - professional behaviour and workplace norms, with consideration of:
 - communication skills
 - digital communication
 - bullying and harassment
 - problem solving and dealing with conflict
 - understanding rights and responsibilities
 - processes for raising concerns and making complaints
- Learners are appropriately debriefed upon concluding work-integrated learning. Debriefing facilitates (as appropriate) reflection, evaluation of the experience and career development learning.

3.1.4 Learner Voice

Learners are encouraged to participate actively in the ongoing development, monitoring and quality assurance of work-integrated learning.

- The learner voice is systematically represented in the governance and quality assurance processes that support work-integrated learning.
 - Particular attention is given to ensuring that this representation reflects the diversity of the learner population and different types of work-integrated learning.
- Mechanisms are in place for learners to provide formative feedback, raise queries and express concerns about work-integrated learning while it is in progress.
 - In the context of workplace-based learning where learners may be based in different locations, internationally or working with a range of workplace partners, consideration is given to how learners can engage with peers and make representations as a cohort.
- Formal feedback is obtained from learners on their experience of work-integrated learning and used in programme monitoring and review processes.

