

Annual Report

2024



**Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann**
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

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Introduction from the Chairperson and the Chief Executive



Prof. Irene Sheridan
Chairperson, QQI



Dr Padraig Walsh
Chief Executive, QQI

In QQI, we are committed to working closely with our diverse set of partners and providers to ensure high-quality, internationally recognised further and higher education opportunities. This annual report provides a summary of our work in 2024, the final year of the period covering QQI’s fourth statement of strategy 2022-24.

QQI hosted a site visit in February by the panel selected by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to assess QQI’s compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). An evaluation against the ESG is required every five years. Following the panel’s report, QQI was judged to substantially comply with the ESG and maintained its membership of ENQA. The report was subsequently submitted to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and in July, EQAR confirmed QQI’s relisting on the register.

In April, QQI published a report following our November 2023 conference celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI was delighted to be included once again in the IBEC Top 100 Companies Leading in Wellbeing. Furthermore, QQI was selected at a ceremony in April as the KeepWell Mark™ award winner for Company of the Year (SME).

In May, QQI was delighted to host the 5th global Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) Biennale – *People, Validation and Power: Democracy in Action* in the Lyrath Estate, Kilkenny. The biennale was attended by more than 370 delegates from 31 countries over five continents.

The QQI TrustEd Ireland Mark was launched in September by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Mr. Patrick O’Donovan, T.D, after he had signed the relevant regulations to establish the due diligence process for the assessment of providers seeking the mark and permitting the opening of the statutory learner protection fund.

In November, QQI held our second biennial conference in the Dublin Royal Convention Centre with the theme *Leading and Learning in a Changing Landscape*. We used the conference as an opportunity to launch the fifth QQI Statement of Strategy 2025-2027 – *Looking after learner interests*.

The current CINNTE cycle of reviews of Irish public higher education institutions ended during the year and an extension of the CINNTE process was applied to the four largest private higher education providers of QQI awards.

The increase in QQI learner certification continued in 2024 with QQI making 212,312 awards to learners (up 9% from 2023).

About QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. It is a state agency whose non-executive members of the board are appointed by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

We are responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. We validate programmes, make awards and are responsible for the promotion, maintenance, development and review of the NFQ. We also inform the public about the quality of education and training programmes and qualifications and advise the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on national policy regarding quality assurance and enhancement in education and training.

Our stakeholders come from all sectors of education and training: learners; providers; employers; government departments; state agencies and funding bodies; regulatory bodies; professional bodies; qualifications awarding bodies; the community and voluntary sector; representative bodies; and international bodies responsible for quality assurance and qualifications.

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

OUR VISION

We are committed to a vision of Ireland that offers diverse high-quality further and higher education opportunities, enabling learners to reach their full potential through achieving qualifications that are widely valued nationally and internationally.

OUR MISSION

We sustain public confidence in the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education providers and provide authoritative information on the diverse range of qualifications included in the National Framework of Qualifications.

OUR VALUES

Our approach to our own work and how we work with our partners is governed by clear values.

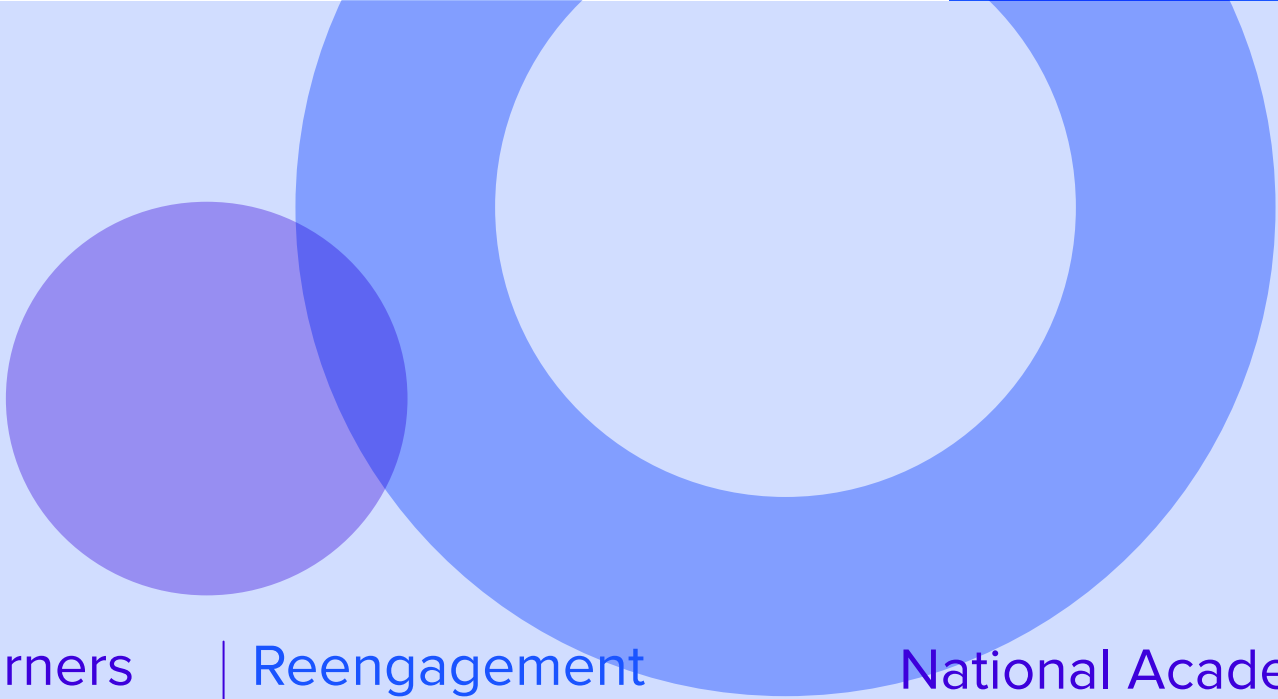
We believe we have a shared responsibility with others to ensure confidence in and continuous improvement of the quality of education and training. We believe that the attainment of our priorities and objectives is best pursued in a **consultative**, **collaborative** and **inclusive** manner with our diverse set of **partners** and providers. We value and respect **partnership** for mutual benefit.

We are committed to working with **objectivity**, **transparency** and **sustainability**. This underpins our decision-making and our policies, procedures and activities. These are evidence-based, informed by national and international good practice, authoritative and conducted with **integrity** in a manner which is openly transparent and engenders trust.

We are committed to making a difference to our partners, providers and our people. We value information, insight and impact – the successful pursuit of goals and objectives which culminate in impacting positively, confidently and substantively on our operating environment.

We are a **learning** organisation. We are committed to **innovation** and **excellence**.

QQI IN NUMBERS



Validation

405 FET Applications

357 New Programme Validations (Incl. differential), 20 revalidations, 13 Extensions of Validation, 15 Refusals

199 HE Applications

47 New Programme Validations, 76 Programme Revalidations, 72 Extensions of Validation, 4 Refusals

Apprenticeships

2 New Apprenticeship Programme Validations, 21 Programme Revalidations (16 submitted by SOLAS)

QQI Learners in 2024

212,312 awards

an increase of 9% from 2023

6,622 CAO offers

made to QQI Award holders (an increase of 12.4% from 2023 figures)

Reengagement Process

28 HE providers'

quality assurance procedures approved by QQI

109 FE providers'

quality assurance procedures approved by QQI

National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)

115,579

number of page views of the NARIC Ireland database (increase of 4% on 2023)

37,385

comparability statement downloads (4.5% increase on 2023)

130

countries out of 160 used the NARIC Ireland customer relationship management (CRM) online form service

1,927

queries and requests to the NARIC mailbox

3,109

queries and requests to the CRM online form service

1,200

phone calls made to NARIC Ireland

6,236

total number of queries to the NARIC Ireland team for 2024

Social Media



5,412 followers

41.7% increase in engagement compared to 2023



12,471 followers

1,566 new followers (increase of 14.4% on 2023)
1.7% increase in engagement on 2023
312,897 impressions (5.6% decrease on 2023)
Engagement per impression rate: 6%



536 fans

(45.7% increase)
30% increase in engagement on 2023
43,349 impressions (23.8% increase)



732 subscribers

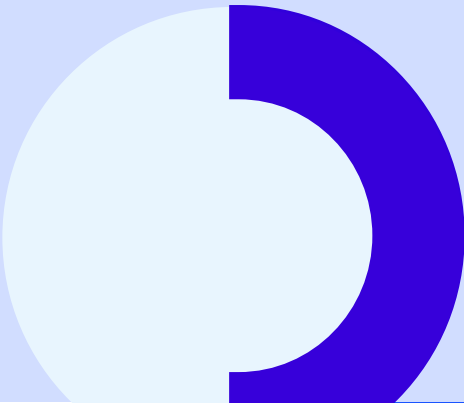
up 149
Video views: 31,533
Impressions: 141,969
Impressions click-through rate: 3.8%

1st Investors in Diversity accreditation

QQI awarded its 1st Investors in Diversity accreditation (Bronze)

11 Quality Dialogue Meetings

with HE institutions



Our work in 2024

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Priority 1 #information
- better information and opportunities for learners

We will provide high quality information to school-leavers and all those seeking learning opportunities on progression pathways across and between different institutions in further and higher education by upgrading QQI’s qualifications information platforms and services

Certification activity figures

In 2024, 138,446 learners received QQI awards, a 10% increase on the 2023 figures.

Development work completed in 2024 to enable enhanced statistical reporting on QQI certification data will change how awarding data are reported henceforth. Under the previous reporting methodology, minor awards which contributed to a major award achieved in the same calendar year were not included in reporting on certification volumes. Future statistical reporting on the certification of QQI awards will include data on all awards made.

For ease of comparison, using the historical reporting methodology, QQI made 212,312 awards* in 2024, representing a 9% increase on the figures reported in 2023. Under the new methodology, the awarding volumes for 2024 were as follows:

Table 1: Certification Activity Figures

Award Sector	Major	Minor	Special Purpose	Supplemental	Total
FET	29,626 (+2.0%)	354,624 (+4.7%)	29,725 (+15.6%)	117 (-4.9%)	414,092 (+5.2%)
HE	10,626 (+6.6%)	660 (-4.6%)	2,475 (+7.3%)	-	13,761 (+6.1%)
Total	40,252 (+3.2%)	355,284 (+4.7%)	32,200 (+14.9%)	117 (-4.9%)	427,853 (+5.3%)

(The data in brackets illustrate the percentage change from the equivalent 2023 figure)

*These data reflect certification volumes recorded following the December 2024 certification period. The figures may be subject to minor changes effected in subsequent certification periods (e.g. arising from learner appeals).

Verification of Qualifications

This service continued to be in high demand in 2024. The reasons for such requests are varied and include proof of qualifications for employers, education evaluation services, college applications and residency requirements in other countries. In 2024, QQI dealt with over 2,500 requests from holders of awards made by QQI and its legacy awarding bodies.

Certificate Replacement Service

In 2024, 464 applications for replacement certificates were processed. This represents an 18% increase on the figures reported in 2023. This service was introduced in 2019, and the volume of requests has continued to increase year on year.

Access to higher education using QQI awards

The Higher Education Links Scheme is a well-established route for holders of QQI awards to access a college course. QQI supports this scheme by providing scored results data to the Central Applications Office (CAO) to enable participating higher education institutions to make offers to QQI award holders.

In 2024, there were 6,622 offers made based on the QQI Further Education (FE) score. This is an increase of 12.4% on 2023 figures. There were 3,462 acceptances based on QQI FE scores. This represents an increase of 15.4% on 2023 figures.

Analysis of QQI Certification Data for 2023

In February 2024, QQI published its [QQI Certification Data and Analysis 2023](#). This analysis, which has been published annually since 2018, provides information on QQI awards made in 2023 by NFQ Level, class,

field of learning, provider type and learner profile for further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE) providers.

From further education and training to higher education: performance of CAO candidates with QQI FET awards

This analysis, presented through an [interactive dashboard](#), provides data and trends relating to a specific cohort of QQI FET learners who achieved a Level 5 or 6 major award in a single sitting and applied to the CAO in the same academic year. The analysis of data is from 2018 to 2024.

National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC Ireland) 2024

QQI hosts NARIC Ireland, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre which provides a free, online service supporting the recognition of foreign academic qualifications through comparison, where possible, to major awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. NARIC Ireland is part of the ENIC-NARIC world-wide network of qualification recognition centres. NARIC Ireland also participates in the Bologna Process (Thematic Peer Group B: Recognition), strengthening automatic mutual recognition arrangements and working with the appropriate competent institutions who have responsibility for the recognition of qualifications, partial qualifications and periods of learning held by refugees, displaced people and migrants. QQI support mobility and recognition across the European Higher Education Area, for the purposes of employment nationally and for individuals with Irish qualifications travelling globally.

Over a five-year period, demand on NARIC services has increased by over 24%, reflecting a rise in mobility and an increasingly diversely qualified labour market. Accordingly, the NARIC database continued to expand, listing 1,840 comparability statements (CS) for new award titles, an increase of 149 since 2023. The guide to using the services is published in ten languages. While the overall pattern of website traffic and comparability statement downloads remains consistent year on year, with our main demand coming from

Brazil, India, Ukraine, Spain and the UK, the volume continues to rise by over 4% annually. Research conducted with our range of service users further confirms the usefulness of the approach to availability of the non-binding comparability statement.

A 13% increase from 2023 in individual queries by email and telephone, managed using the on-line CRM platform, connects us to the range of service beneficiaries and informs service development.



CASE STUDY (I)
NARIC TABLEAU PUBLICATION

In 2024, a new interactive visualisation of website metrics from the [NARIC Ireland database](#) was prepared for publication on the QQI website. The visuals include information on the country of origin of individuals using the service and the most visited qualifications.

Better understanding of demand helps us strategically direct our service and can support stronger integration of our contribution with other government policy initiatives and services. Working collaboratively across QQI with expert colleagues, NARIC Ireland developed and published data using ‘Tableau’ to identify usage trends, and recognition partners with whom we will work more closely in the future. In time, our Tableau data will help users understand and interpret

trends, for example in the levels and kinds of qualifications, and in the preparation that people make prior to travelling both from Ireland to overseas and from overseas to Ireland.

The areas included in the Tableau presentation for the year 2023 were:

- Total views: the number of web pages users have viewed by continent and country.
- The origin (‘target country’) where the qualification originates.
- The location (‘from country’) where the comparability statement was downloaded.

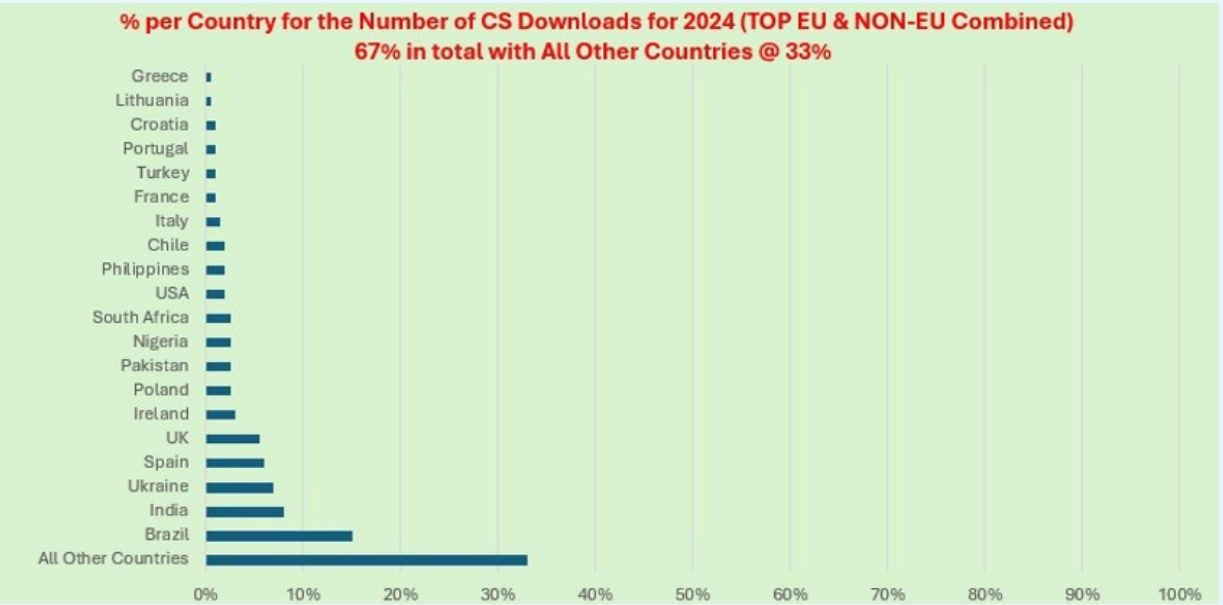


Figure 1: Percentage per Country for the number of CS downloads for 2024 (Top EU and Non-EU combined)

NARIC Ireland 2023 and 2024 [statistics](#) on the recognition of foreign qualifications are published on QQI’s website.

Review and enhance the new Qualifax site, develop promotional campaign and guidance documents

Following on from extensive redevelopment in 2023, maintenance work continued during 2024, and small improvements were made to the new site.

Surveys of guidance counsellors and of general Qualifax users were conducted in 2024, the results of which will be used to help streamline and improve the search functionality on the Qualifax website.

Launch next phase of Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ) development including publication of the TrustEd Ireland (formerly IEM) information, micro-credentials and links to the European databases

The [IRQ](#) has been operational since 2020 and now lists over 12,000 qualifications and over 14,000 programmes included within the NFQ for 222 providers. Most Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) made an upload to the IRQ in 2024, ensuring that information about programmes and awards continues to be up to date and accurate.

In July 2024, QQI in association with the Irish National Europass Centre (NEC) and Irish European Qualifications Framework National Contact Point (EQF-NCP), published the [IRQ data](#) for higher education programmes to the Qualification Dataset Register (QDR) making this information on higher education options visible at EU level. The cooperation of the DABs continues to be critical to the comprehensive population of both these databases.

IRQ End User Workshops

QQI hosted five IRQ end user workshops in September and October 2024. Across two of these workshops, a total of 20 representatives from almost all DABs involved in the upload of

data to the IRQ participated. These workshops enabled DAB representatives to share valuable insights into their experiences and knowledge of the IRQ upload process and how it can be improved. There were also three workshops with potential end users of the IRQ spanning admissions, access and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) officers from institutions as well as employers, professional and regulatory bodies and those supporting learners. The workshops focused on how the IRQ could support their work and ultimately support learners to navigate the education system and enhance opportunities for employment, mobility and access to education.

These workshops are part of a longer-term project to re-develop the IRQ to support QQI's commitment in its Statement of Strategy 2025-27 to ensure a higher quality of information for learners on QQI's information platforms, including the IRQ.

We will play our part in ensuring that learners can achieve their potential within the further and higher education system by evaluating provider adherence to a national approach to access, transfer and progression and the appropriate recognition of prior learning

Building on our engagements with FET and HE stakeholders, and international engagements, scope and publish a document setting out a national approach to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in tertiary education

QQI, at the request of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, reports on national progress in implementing the 2012 Recommendation on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

(RPL) to the EQF Advisory Group (EQF AG). In 2024, following contributions nationally to the research, [CEDEFOP published Country Inventories](#) alongside a national [Case Study on Micro-Credentials](#). QQI was privileged to serve as 'discussant' for the [Estonian one-off report on the national validation system](#) as part of a peer-review process of the EQF AG designed to stimulate reflection on characteristics that support effective development. The Estonian report signals strong permeability between sectors and the labour market supported by RPL. The Eurydice Report was published including references to practice across higher education, with contributions from QQI. National progress reports are linked back with stakeholders through members on the RPL Practitioner Network Steering Group and on the Network LinkedIn page.

QQI continued to support the development of the RPL Practitioner Network Ireland, an important collective for the diversity of RPL practitioners, sectoral networks and policy agents nationally. A national event attended by approximately eighty people was hosted in Athlone in November, consolidating the impact of the [5th VPL Biennale](#) hosted in Kilkenny in May. Expert panel discussions, workshops and presentations were facilitated by past and current Co-Convenors, Martina Needham, Angela Higgins, Karina Curley and Siobhan Magee.

Webinars continued to be supported by AONTAS and focused on preparation for the VPL Biennale. QQI also provided ongoing support for the continued enhancement of national practice, sectoral frameworks, toolkits and professional development through active participation in the delivery of digital badges and other sectoral initiatives. These included those offered by the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) funded project, 'RPL in Higher Education' and the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. These engagements provide essential opportunities to explore key issues in

RPL policy and practice, informed by national and international perspectives.

Consistent with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Skills Review Recommendations, QQI continued work, informed by these engagements and others internationally, in the context of an exploratory paper considering the relationship between recognition and validation and taking account of perspectives of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and associated texts, to progress towards national policy, criteria and guidelines for RPL.

Publish and consult on the Access Transfer and Progression Policy and Guidelines White Paper

In December 2024, [QQI published a Green Paper on QQI's Access, Transfer and Progression Policy](#) which builds on the review of the landscape of practice supporting Access Transfer and Progression (ATP) in Ireland which was published in 2023. The existing QQI ATP Policy is a restatement of the original National Qualifications Authority of Ireland's (NQAI) policy, which was published in 2003, and it is timely to update the policy position.

The 2024 green paper recommends the direction for an updated QQI ATP policy which would be driven by high level principles informed by ATP practice on the ground. The proposed new policy retains many of the principles of the NQAI policy but expands on the concept of credit, credit accumulation and credit transfer by proposing an approach to stacking of smaller qualifications, including micro-credentials. The green paper also proposes a renewed emphasis on exit arrangements and proposes the need for data collection and provision to better understand ATP practice and trends.

The consultation will be open until April 2025, and a white paper will be published later that year.

CASE STUDY (II)

5TH VPL BIENNALE: PEOPLE, VALIDATION AND POWER: DEMOCRACY IN ACTION?



In May 2024, Ireland, Canada and the USA co-hosted the 5th VPL Biennale. Over 370 people from 31 countries and five continents came together responding to the theme, People, validation and power: democracy in action? The Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) Biennale is hosted every two years with support from the European Commission, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). QQI as national chair, with other Irish stakeholders, including the Irish University Association (IUA), the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), the RPL in Higher Education (Human Capital Initiative) project, Education and Training Boards Ireland

(ETBI), Munster Technological University (MTU), South East Technological University (SETU), Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) and the Donegal Education and Training Board were pleased to lead national engagement in partnership with US and Canadian colleagues, in bringing this global event to Kilkenny, Ireland.

The conference opened with a keynote address by Professor Ted Fleming, Maynooth University, who called for reflection on recognition as both a cornerstone of democracy and as an emancipatory act, with associated pedagogies and practices, and closing memorably with a call to generosity. Policy makers and practitioners from

around the world shared responses to the conference theme and concept paper, and to the four sub-themes of validation (RPL) and the individual, inclusion, skills and mobility, over four plenary panel discussions, 90 workshops, lightning talks and round table discussions. The biennale was attended by international thought leaders from the European Commission, UNESCO, CEDEFOP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning and the European Platform for Lifelong Learning, European Civil Society for Education, the US Department of the Treasury, the National Council for Standardisation and Certification of Labour Skills Conocer, Mexico, Seoul National University, South Korea, the University of Johannesburg, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the European Association for the Education of Adults, the Empire State University of New York, and Munster Technological University.

Panel conversations linked developments and learning in the objectives and outcomes of system-level research to the direct purposes and policy directions of validation as it is practiced in different jurisdictions. A global rapid growth in mobility highlights our need to work at scale while remaining sensitive to culture and not losing sight of coherence and connectivity. Qualifications frameworks were highlighted among tools that can support validation practices. The role of data and

monitoring was also highlighted to facilitate better understanding of who is engaging, why and with what impacts. In European policy terms as part of the European Pillar of Social Rights, validation is perceived as an enabler of lifelong learning, of active social and meaningful economic participation, and is supported by individual learning accounts and other cohesion measures.

The global validation community celebrates the continued availability and impact of the many prescient insights from presentations through the [recordings](#) of the 5th VPL Biennale already made available, with more to follow in 2025.

We will improve learner choice and opportunity by including an increased range of flexible qualifications including micro-credentials in the National Framework of Qualifications



Highlights

- 2023 marked 20 years of our **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**.
- Preliminary work done to **expand access to the NFQ** for very specific professional or industry specific education providers.
- Further **information provision & outreach**, targeting learners, providers, & employers but also groups who may have been excluded previously (such as refugees).
- Development work underway on **redevelopment of the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ)**.

Best Practices & Tools

- In Q4 2023, QQI held a **conference to mark 20 years of the framework** alongside workshops examining the NFQ & developments in the further & higher education sectors including speakers from national, EU, & international agencies.
- Development of **formal communications strategy around Europass** - particularly focussing on content related to new templates for Diploma & Certificate supplements.
- **Capacity building & training for staff** across QQI to enable them to provide information on: Europass, the NFQ & EQF, & our websites (Qualifax & the IRQ).

Share with us!

The Europass Ireland NEC, EQF NCP Ireland, & QQI are always interested in learning from other jurisdictions in terms of how they:

- **collect data,**
- **communicate information, &**
- **promote initiatives.**

Contact Info

Website: [QQI.ie](https://www.qqi.ie)
Social Media Channels (X):
[@QQI_Connect](#), [@europassIE](#)



Listed Awarding Bodies (LABs)

Following consultation in 2023, policies relating to the development and implementation of the Listed Awarding Bodies (LABs) scheme were published in September 2024 and include:

- [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for LABs engaging with QQI on a voluntary basis](#)
- [Core Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of LABs](#)
- [Core Policies and Criteria for Inclusion of Awards in the Framework](#)

In addition to these policies, QQI developed and published a toolkit to support prospective LABs in preparing to apply to QQI. The toolkit includes:

- [A gap analysis for QA procedures](#)
- [A Brief Guide to the National Framework of Qualifications](#)
- [A guide to referencing existing qualifications to the NFQ](#)
- [A handbook for LABs](#)
- [Application forms](#)

Work with prospective LABs and meetings with interested providers and awarding bodies was ongoing in 2024. In October 2024, a webinar on the introduction to the LABs application and process was held. This event was attended by over 50 participants representing approximately 20 prospective LABs.

The LABs scheme will be opened on a phased basis and will be accepting applications from invited applicants in 2025.

NFQ Policy Review

In December 2024, QQI published a [Programme for Review of the National Framework of Qualifications Policies](#), which will be a key driver of the strategic priority to future-proof the NFQ as the authoritative information source for quality-assured tertiary qualifications. This review will include the further development of QQI's platforms to promote the NFQ as the authoritative source of information on quality-assured qualifications including micro-credentials. Review and modification of the current system of award types in the NFQ to better serve learners in a more integrated tertiary education system, including general education qualifications delivered via the school system will also be included.

The project for the NFQ Policy Review will begin in 2025 and will be conducted over several years (up to 2028). However, in 2024 work began on two NFQ related projects – a revised access, transfer and progression policy and proposed changes to intermediate qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6.

Intermediate Qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6

In December 2024, QQI published a [Green Paper on Intermediate Qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6](#) which proposes a single major award at NFQ Level 6 and explores related changes required at NFQ Level 5. The proposal is a solution to the frequent discussion and ongoing tension regarding the placement of separate further and higher education awards at NFQ Level 6, with the Advanced Certificate (AC) and Higher Certificate (HC). It is well documented as causing confusion for end users of qualifications and unequal progression opportunities for learners. Several reports and reviews conducted in the last decade have pointed to this issue at Level 6. It is proposed that the changes in the green paper will simplify the NFQ, improve access, transfer and progression opportunities for learners, and support a unified tertiary education system.

The consultation will be open until March 2025, with a white paper expected by May. The proposed single major award at NFQ Level 6 is proposed to be available from September 2025.

Pre-conference Workshop

On 20 November 2024, QQI held a pre-conference workshop for representatives from across further and higher education exploring the role of intermediate qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6, and access, transfer and progression (ATP) policy in building a

unified tertiary system. This workshop brought together approximately 30 participants from across further and higher education, including representation from public and private, independent Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and further education and training providers, the National Tertiary Office (NTO), the National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) and DFHERIS to discuss NFQ Levels 5 and 6 and ATP.

Participants agreed that qualifications at NFQ Level 6 broadly have three purposes:

- progression to higher education
- access to employment and labour market
- social inclusion.

Overall, participants agreed and were positively disposed to the introduction of a single major award at NFQ Level 6 as it would simplify the system and bring clarity for learners, employers and other stakeholders. The workshop concluded with four invited case studies from Dublin City University (DCU), College Connect, National College of Ireland (NCI) and City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB), showcasing innovative, progressive and inspiring approaches to access, transfer and progression.

Correct Referencing on the NFQ

In 2024, 12 referrals of incorrect referencing to the Irish NFQ were received by QQI in relation to 12 individual organisations. The most common issue identified was incorrect information about the comparability of UK qualifications to the Irish NFQ. Each organisation was contacted, directed to the [Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries Guide](#) and directed to correct the information provided. A representative from QQI's Qualifications Information and Learning

Opportunities division followed up to ensure the appropriate changes were implemented. All cases from 2024 are closed.

Annual Meeting of the UK and Ireland Qualifications Frameworks Group

The annual meeting of the UK and Ireland Qualifications Framework Group (the Five Countries Group) was hosted by QQI in Dublin on 25 and 26 January 2024. Representatives from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland attended and provided updates on national qualifications systems and frameworks, quality assurance of qualifications, and related policy developments.

QQI provided updates on the 20th anniversary of the NFQ and associated publications, the CINNTE review cycle and TrustEd Ireland. The group specifically requested discussion in relation to assessment and academic integrity. As such, QQI presented the work of our Rethinking Assessment Programme and the work of both the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN).

The annual meetings of this group are essential to maintain communications as part of our bilateral agreement across the five countries in this framework group, supporting the high levels of mobility between our jurisdictions. The Five Countries Group is also responsible for maintaining the Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries Guide for comparing qualifications across our jurisdictions. This guide was updated in 2024.

The 2025 annual meeting will be hosted by Northern Ireland.

Qualifications, Information and Learning Opportunities Events 2024

QQI's Qualifications Information and Learning

Opportunities (QILO) division exhibits at and attends events targeting learners and other end users of Europass, the EQF-NCP, the NFQ, the IRQ and Qualifax. Highlights from 2024 events are outlined below.

Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) Conference

Members of QQI's QILO team attended the IGC national conference from 8 to 9 March at MTU in Tralee. This event provided the chance to engage with more than 75 guidance counsellors and an opportunity to promote Qualifax, QQI, the NFQ, and Europass.

Carlow Jobs and Advice Fair

The Carlow Jobs and Advice Fair was held by the Department of Social Protection on 14 March. QILO representatives exhibited at the fair to showcase Qualifax, the NFQ and Europass. The fair provided a valuable opportunity to engage with the public and answer their questions directly.

Employment and Recruitment Federation (ERF) Talent Con

QILO exhibited at the ERF TalentCon on 4 April representing QQI, Europass and the EQF-NCP. The event provided a chance to meet with a mix of employers and recruiters and discuss the NFQ, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the IRQ, Europass tools and resources, QQI and more.

Higher Options

In September, QQI staff members attended the Higher Options event in Dublin, where they promoted the NFQ, EQF, Qualifax, Europass and QQI to almost 30,000 attendees including students, teachers and guidance counsellors.

Career Options Cork

QQI's QILO division attended the Career

Options event in Cork on 15 and 16 October 2024.

This annual exhibition is for senior cycle students who are researching their future options after they have finished school. Qualifax was promoted showcasing its role as a resource for learners exploring learning and career pathways.

Career Path Options 2024

QQI's QILO division exhibited at Career Path Options 2024 in Galway on 22 October and in Mayo on 23 October.

The Career Path Options exhibition is aimed at senior cycle students who are exploring their career options and the QILO team provided attendees with information on how to use Qualifax to explore their learning and career opportunities.

EuroGuidance Event

On 24 October 2024, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) hosted a EuroGuidance event in Athlone, where a QILO representative presented to attendees on the work of QQI as the EQF-NCP and Irish National Europass Centre.

TAICEP Conference

QQI representatives attended the Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals (TAICEP) Annual Conference in Quebec City, Canada from 28 to 31 October 2024. Members of QQI's QILO and International Mobility and Prior Learning divisions presented about the role information and high-quality national registers of qualifications can play in supporting and enabling fair and equitable credential evaluation. The engagement with attendees provided lots of useful feedback, which will

shape and inform the redevelopment of the Irish Register of Qualifications.

We will play our part in ensuring that all learners are enabled to access accredited qualifications in learning environments suitable to their needs including in the workplace

Plan and implement new Europass EQF 2024-27 project

National Europass Centre (NEC) and European Qualifications Framework National Contact Point (EQF-NCP) Joint Action Project 2024-2026

QQI is the designated European Qualifications Framework National Coordination Point (EQF-NCP) and National Europass Centre (NEC) and receives funding from the European Education and Culture Executive Agency to support this work. The project for 2024-2026 was approved in May 2024. The [funding statement](#) is published on QQI's website.

Key priorities of the project include:

- increasing the impact of the EU Reference Group and strengthening partnerships with other agencies through the Inter-agency Network,
- increasing and maintaining engagement and impact of communications regarding the work of QQI and Europass through planned social media communications and at events,
- increased promotion of Europass tools such as the Diploma and Certificate Supplements,

- the redevelopment of the IRQ,
- opening access to the NFQ through the LABs process, and
- the review of NFQ policies.

Communications and Promotion

In May, through the work of the Europass Communication and Promotion Working Group, Europass Ireland in collaboration with Europass Latvia ran the social media channels for Europass Europe. During 2024, a LinkedIn page for [Europass Ireland](#) was launched to enhance communication and engagement with Europass end users by providing regular updates and insights.

In 2024, the Europass platform had notable engagement both in Ireland and globally. Globally, Europass Europe recorded 16.4 million unique visitors and 27.5 million visits. Ireland accounted for 81,298 unique visitors and 115,444 visits to the platform in 2024. In total, 1.7 million Europass Profiles were newly created in 2024 with 3,111 new Europass Profiles created for those who selected Irish nationality. In relation to the Europass CV, globally 8.3 million were downloaded in 2024 and there were 8,521 CVs downloaded by those who selected Irish nationality. Overall, while Ireland has a smaller share in the total Europass end user base compared to some other countries, the numbers reflect awareness of Europass and steady engagement with the Europass platform and tools.

In September, staff from the EQF-NCP and NEC organised and participated in internal QQI staff training on Qualifax, Europass and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. This training was supported by colleagues in the International Mobility and Prior Learning Division who provided an overview of the work of NARIC and its relevance to the Irish

NFQ. This training provided an opportunity for attendees to learn and ask questions on these topics. It also provided useful information and tips for those attendees interested in providing support at upcoming outreach and engagement events such as Higher Options.

Meetings

Representatives from QQI attended regular meetings of the EQF Advisory Group and Europass Advisory Group both online and in person and were involved in several sub-groups and working groups.

In March, a representative from QQI joined a panel at the CEDEFOP online event ‘Building the European Map of Qualifications – Latest NFQ Developments’ to discuss inclusive and flexible national frameworks of qualifications.

In June, representatives from QQI, the Irish NEC, and Irish EQF-NCP attended the Joint Policy Networks meeting. At the meeting, a poster update on the work of the Irish NEC and EQF-NCP was presented and a representative from the Irish EQF-NCP participated in a panel on promoting collaboration between EQF, Europass and Euroguidance.

Throughout 2024, a representative of QQI was involved in the project group to conduct a comparison of the South African Development Community Qualifications Framework with the EQF. A representative of QQI also joined the EQF Standing Group on International Qualifications which is developing procedures for the levelling of international qualifications included in NFQs of two or more EU member states.

The ‘Europe is Open to You’ Inter-Agency Group met twice during 2024 to update on EU funded project/programme activities and identify areas for collaboration.

Diploma Supplement Survey

The Diploma Supplement is a key tool for higher education graduates to ensure recognition of their qualifications. Graduates in over 40 countries, have the right to obtain the Diploma Supplement automatically, free of charge, and in a widely spoken European language.

The Diploma Supplement provides information to higher education graduates on their personal achievements, including course credits, grades, and what they learned during their studies. The Diploma Supplement is issued to graduates via their higher education institutions.

In August 2024, QQI issued a survey to Higher Education Providers and Designated Awarding Bodies to better understand the existing approaches to the implementation of the Europass Diploma Supplement in Ireland. This survey was undertaken to support upcoming developments such as the updating of the Europass Diploma Supplement in 2025, the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement, and the issuing of the supplement as a digital credential, which is supported by the European Commission to combat qualification and credential fraud.

Data collection for the survey took place between August and November 2024 and the survey was administered via MS Forms. In total, 16 DABs and 35 Higher Education (HE) Providers were contacted to participate in survey. Overall, 30 surveys were completed resulting in a response rate of 59%. The results from the study relate to a sample of 15 DABs and 15 HE Providers. Key findings from the survey included:

- For over one-third of institutions (40%, n=12), it was unknown when the Diploma

Supplement template was last updated by the institution.

- Overall, 90% (n=27) of the institution that responded to the survey issue the Diploma Supplement for major awards.
- Of the 27 institutions which issue the Diploma Supplement for major awards:
 - It was found that operationally the method for issuing it varied across institutions with the majority (67%, n=18) automatically issuing it and one-third of the institutions (33%, n=9) providing the Diploma Supplement to graduates only when requested.
 - It is more common for institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement in digital (70%, n=19) than physical format (30%, n=8).
- 26 out of the 27 institutions stated that they issued the Diploma Supplement free of charge.
- The majority (73%, n=22) of the 30 institutions that responded to the survey do not issue the Diploma Supplement for non-major awards.
- Four out of every five (80%, n=24) institutions noted that they do accept the Diploma Supplement as evidence of a qualification as part of their admission procedures.

A report detailing the full analysis of the survey results will be published in 2025, which will provide deeper insights into the findings.

CASE STUDY (III)
PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: EUROPASS MOBILITY SUPPLEMENT

In 2024, the European Commission launched an updated Europass Mobility document, and Ireland’s National Europass Centre (NEC), hosted by QQI, introduced a new process for issuing the Europass Mobility Supplement (Post Mobility Document). The updated process followed Lean Six Sigma principles, focusing on adding value for users, primarily partners like Further Education institutions and, by extension, learners.

The previous process had a number of inefficiencies which were eliminated by the NEC creating a dedicated Europass Mobility webpage on the QQI website. This webpage provides clear instructions, templates, and return information, reducing the need for email communication. Contact details for support were also made available to ensure users could get help when needed.

To simplify the return process for mobility documents, sending partners now use a Microsoft form. This automatically generates a single, consolidated spreadsheet for all mobility returns, eliminating the need for multiple spreadsheets.

A communication plan was developed to ensure stakeholders were informed about the changes. Sending partners, who previously preferred email communication, were contacted directly with clear explanations about why the process was being updated. The launch of the new process also coincided with the release of the updated Europass Mobility document, providing a convenient opportunity to explain these improvements.

In August 2024, a brief presentation about the Europass Mobility Supplement and the new process was given to the International Projects Hub at ETBI and the supporting information was provided to Léargas for circulation to Erasmus+ Coordinators. The new process has been in place since September 2024 and has been positively received by sending partners, who are actively using the new return form. Further evaluation of the changes will take place in 2025 to measure their success.

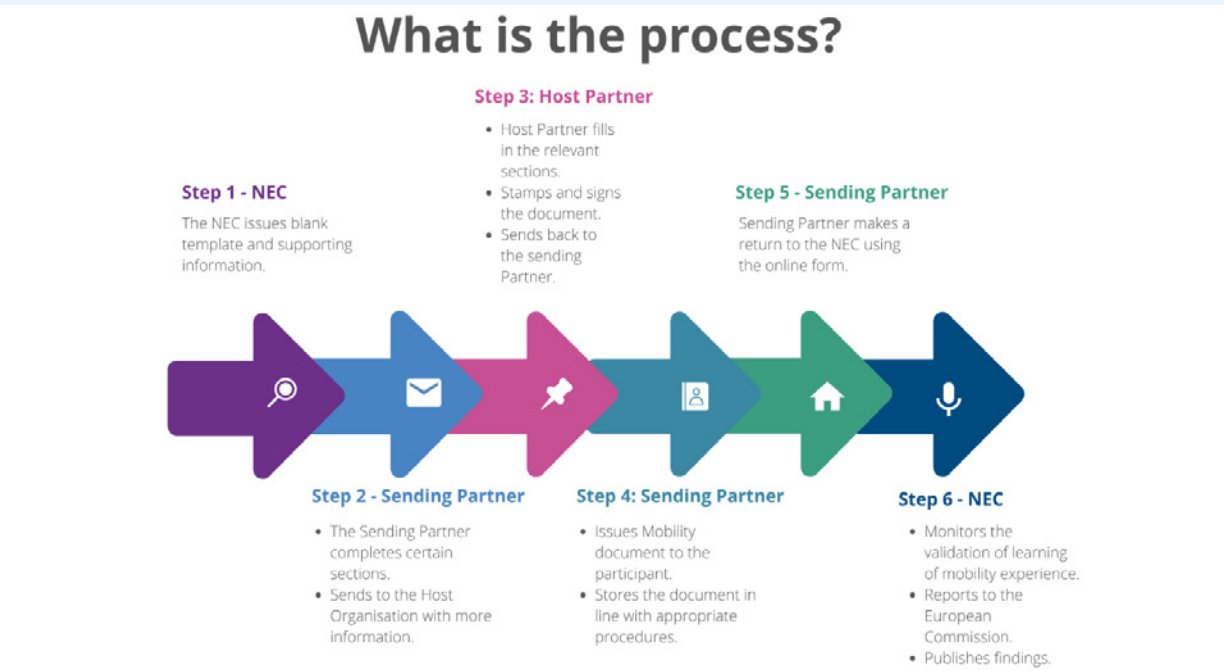


Figure 2: Overview of the Updated Process

We will exercise a key role in ensuring learners have access to a wide range of new high-quality apprenticeship programmes spanning further and higher education

Support SOLAS, NAO and other stakeholders in the development of a single, integrated apprenticeship model incorporating the best features of both the craft and consortia models

QQI continued to support the development of a single, integrated apprenticeship model. The National Apprenticeship Office and DFHERIS continued to discuss a proposed new model and associated budgetary arrangements during 2024.

Priority 2 #protection
– implementing strengthened regulation to protect learners

We will protect learners by promoting and maintaining awareness of academic integrity and the monitoring of those seeking to undermine it

Academic Integrity

QQI was pleased to engage with stakeholders nationally and internationally to continue to foster a positive culture of academic integrity in 2024. While there are significant threats to maintaining the integrity of qualifications, awareness raising and the promotion of a collaborative culture including students, staff and institutions is gaining further momentum as evidenced by the national and international collaborations outlined below.

Nationally, two significant academic integrity conferences took place in 2024; College of Computing Technology’s (CCT) conference *Enhancing Academic Integrity: From ideas to action 2024* in September and *Navigating the New Frontier: Generative AI (GenAI) and Academic Integrity* in October, hosted in partnership by Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick (UL) and Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), in association with the National Academic Integrity Network. QQI welcomes such initiatives and opportunities for learning from national and international academic integrity experts.

White Paper on Academic Integrity

In 2024, QQI published a [white paper on academic integrity](#) which set out its intended approach to implementing the legislative provision in section 43A. This approach was informed by four pillars: proportionality, transparency, shared responsibility and provider autonomy. The paper also referenced the powers conferred by other statutory infrastructure within the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2019 \(as amended\)](#) and set out five central pillars to the proposed policy.

The paper recognised the responsibility of education providers for their own internal quality assurance systems, and the responsibilities of learners and staff to engage with their studies and work within the scope of these systems. It also explained how QQI would engage with other stakeholders to protect the integrity of Irish qualifications. These stakeholders include advertising and publishing platforms, which also have obligations under the legislation.

It is anticipated that the policy will be published in 2025.

Contributions to national and international events on academic integrity

The 2024 theme of the ‘International Day of Action on Academic Integrity’ was ‘All hands-on deck: Making academic integrity someone’s job’. Included in the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI) activities was a panel discussion hosted by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, QAA, UK on *Responsibility for academic integrity from an international quality enhancement perspective*. QQI participated in the discussion alongside colleagues from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Ghana, the

Council on Higher Education (CHE) South Africa, and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), Australia.

Nationally, QQI contributed to an Engineers Ireland training event in October where QQI outlined its roles in promoting a positive culture of academic integrity and its statutory responsibilities regarding contract cheating.

The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN)

In 2024, the National Academic Integrity Network continued to grow its membership and in June, the Education and Training Boards were invited to nominate representatives to join the network.

An information session on the work of the NAIN was delivered to FET directors in late September and the NAIN received a number of nominations for membership.

NAIN Collaborations

In addition to valuable national collaborations via the NAIN plenaries and working groups, NAIN was invited to collaborate with colleagues in academic integrity initiatives nationally and internationally. These included: *Navigating the New Frontier: GenAI and Academic Integrity* conference, which was held in Limerick and online in October 2024. The conference was hosted in partnership by Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick and Technological University of the Shannon, in association with the National Academic Integrity Network, and funded by the National Forum through the Strategic Alignment for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) fund. This conference explored the relationship between GenAI and Academic Integrity within the Higher Education (HE) sector.



NAIN engaged with N-TUTORR, the national collaborative programme across the technological higher education sector, on its academic integrity stream in 2024.

The University of Bournemouth academic integrity webinar series was endorsed by both NAIN and QQI in late 2024. This series of webinars was designed to address critical issues in academic integrity, considering in particular emerging technologies such as GenAI and offering support to researchers and educators navigating the evolving academic landscape.

NAIN events

In addition to regular steering group meetings, NAIN held four network meetings, two online and two face-to-face, in 2024. NAIN extended its thanks to colleagues at the Technological University of the Shannon, who hosted the June meeting and to colleagues in Dublin City University, who hosted the December plenary meeting.

In November 2024, NAIN hosted a masterclass with international academic integrity expert Dr Irene Glendinning, former Academic Integrity Lead for Coventry University Group, UK, and independent researcher in academic and research integrity. The class entitled ‘*The Big Picture – Institutional leadership for promoting integrity*’ focused on academic integrity as part of a wider strategic conversation on institutional governance via the lens of the Governance Assurance Matrix for Academic Integrity (GAMAI) developed by Dr Irene Glendinning and Dr Sharon Andrews, Chair of the RMIT Academic Board and Programme Manager, The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Andrews and Glendinning, 2023).

Senior leaders from across the higher education sector attended the masterclass, which included discussions on the four elements identified within the GAMAI framework, described by Glendinning and Andrews in their 2023 paper published in the *Handbook for Academic Integrity, 2nd Edition* entitled ‘Governing academic integrity: conceptualising the assurance and efficacy of strategies and outcomes’.

International recognition of NAIN resource

The May 2024 publication of the ETINED (the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education) [Glossary of Terms related to Ethics and Integrity in Education](#) included a number of references to the [National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms](#), evidencing the impact of the reach and work of the National Academic Integrity Network, supported by QQI in partnership with colleagues across the Higher Education sector.

The Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN)

The Global Academic Integrity Network, a joint initiative of QQI and TEQSA, the Australian higher education regulator, is a consortium of quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities and other organisations with a remit in relation to academic integrity.

The network aims to facilitate the sharing of information, data and approaches regarding contract cheating and academic fraud. This in turn will support awareness-raising among members and the development of common, global approaches to disrupting the industry that has grown around contract cheating and academic fraud.

In September 2024, the GAIN issued a collective statement calling on major social media and online platforms to take a stand against academic dishonesty. In an open letter, GAIN asked these platforms, including X, LinkedIn and Google, to join the fight against academic dishonesty and take action to stop the advertising of contract cheating services.

In December 2024, the network included over 40 members from five continents and was endorsed by ENQA; the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI); the Council of Europe and the European Students Union (ESU).

More information regarding the [Global Academic Integrity Network](#) (GAIN) is available online.

Expand and continue to manage the Global Academic Integrity Network to include the publication of collective GAIN statements, in partnership with co-founders TEQSA

The Global Academic Integrity Network is a consortium of education quality and integrity agencies worldwide joining forces to fight the rise of commercial academic cheating services targeting students.

The network welcomed new members in 2024, bringing the total membership to 43, representing countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Oceania.

Expand reporting relationships and activity with global advertising and publishing platforms and other stakeholders whose platforms may be used for the promotion of contract cheating and other forms of academic fraud

Regulatory activities

QQI updated its processes for monitoring advertisements for contract cheating to increase efficiency and investigated tools which may assist in reporting. QQI continued to work with global advertising and publishing platforms regarding the promotion of contract cheating and academic fraud.

QQI issued quarterly academic integrity updates to providers which included lists of websites which may be used to promote contract cheating and elements of academic fraud.

Manage National Academic Integrity Network, including liaison with chair, supporting the network’s provision of training and professional development and guiding the development and implementation of resources. Continue to manage the production and circulation of the quarterly academic integrity update, including effecting enhancements to its format and content.

In 2024, the National Academic Integrity Network continued to grow its membership and in June, the Education and Training Boards were invited to nominate representatives to join the Network.

An information session on the work of the NAIN was delivered to Further Education and Training Directors in late September and the NAIN received a number of nominations for membership.

We will robustly assess and monitor private providers for their fitness to offer QQI awards and provide security to their learners through our stewardship of the statutory learner protection fund

Implement, deliver and monitor the Due Diligence process

An interactive online process was developed to facilitate providers in demonstrating that they meet the “capacity and capability criteria” specified in ministerial regulations. These ministerial regulations were enacted on 1 September 2024. The Due Diligence process opened in October 2024 in the context of provider applications for the TrustEd Ireland mark. A suite of documents was designed and published to support these providers in engaging with the online portal and QQI. In addition, an evaluation process was developed to support the evaluation of the providers against the criteria. In parallel, 2024 saw the commencement of the development of a separate Due Diligence portal for QQI applicant providers, all of whom are required to demonstrate that they meet the criteria outlined in the ministerial regulations. Existing QQI providers will also engage with this process over the next few years.

Implement and manage the approved national Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) scheme in line with legislative requirements and timeframes

With the enactment of the final sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 on 1 September 2024, a new statutory Learner Protection Fund was established. This fund applies to a larger number of providers/learners than the previous learner protection

arrangements. The fund is underpinned by ministerial regulations specifying the annual charges to be made by various classes of providers into the fund. While the fund has been established, statutory learner protection arrangements in place for programmes leading to QQI awards will continue in being for a three-year period until 1 September 2027, or an earlier date if specified by the minister.

A learner protection event occurred early in the calendar year. All learners due to complete their programme in 2024 were facilitated in doing so. Continuing learners were facilitated and supported in transferring to an alternative provider to continue their chosen programme.

We will contribute to ensuring a high-quality learning experience for international learners through our issuing of the TrustEd Ireland Mark (formerly the IEM) for higher education and English language education (ELE) providers

TrustEd Ireland (formerly IEM): implement communications plan and run associated events for stakeholders, in collaboration with Partnerships Division, DFHERIS and the Department of Justice

A communications plan was developed to support HE and ELE providers throughout the TrustEd Ireland Application Window One (14 October 2024 to 28 March 2025). Weekly webinars were held separately for HE and ELE providers to support them in their preparation to apply. The webinars are planned to continue in 2025 up until the closing of the window one application period. Events for stakeholders included an in-person briefing on assessment in April and a presentation at the QQI Conference in November.

TrustEd Ireland (formerly IEM): open the scheme for applications and implement assessment process

The TrustEd Ireland scheme was formally launched on 25 September 2024 by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Mr. Patrick O'Donovan T.D., The TrustEd Ireland application window one opened on 14 October 2024, with 68 providers (35 HE and 33 ELE) confirming their intention to apply in window one.

TrustEd Ireland (formerly IEM): develop promotional campaign to support the launch of TrustEd Ireland

The campaign to promote the TrustEd Ireland brand will be included in the overall communications strategy for the brand and scheme to be developed in Quarter 1, 2025.

TrustEd Ireland (formerly IEM): develop suite of training materials and implement training plan for HE and ELE assessors

The following materials were developed: handbooks for HE and ELE providers, application templates, handbooks for HE and ELE assessors, Information Technology (IT) handbooks and videos and training materials for HE and ELE assessors.

Priority 3 #development - driving and stimulating provider development

We will engage with community education providers to ensure access for their learners to education and training qualifications in the National Framework of Qualifications including by working in partnership with Education and Training Boards where appropriate

Community/Voluntary Sector (CVS) Provider Forum

In 2024, QQI established the inaugural forum for existing community and voluntary sector providers of programmes leading to QQI awards. This online forum, which meets at least twice a year is organised by QQI and led by the CVS providers. CVS providers take turns to chair the forum and present on good practice. The forum provides a space to discuss areas of good practice for the benefit of the overall sector, of the individuals working within it and most importantly, of the learners. Programme validation was chosen as the theme of the inaugural forum due to the requirement of all providers who have completed the quality assurance approval process with QQI, to develop and submit a programme for validation. CVS providers who completed the validation process presented on their experience of developing and submitting a programme to QQI for validation and gave practical advice to others as they embark on their own journey. QQI also presented on the opportunities to develop programme derived award standards (PDAS) as the experience of

the CVS providers has mainly been using the Common Awards System (CAS).

We will support capacity for flexible and innovative programme development and robust quality assurance in the ETBs

New Integrated Award Standards for Business

Based on engagement with subject matter experts and public consultation, the [Integrated Award Standards for Business at NFQ Levels 5-9](#) were developed in 2024. This pilot development of new QQI Award Standards at tertiary levels aligns with emerging [government policy promoting a more unified tertiary education system](#); supporting the development of a range of flexible and diverse programmes at NFQ Levels 5-9 in the broad field of business.

Procedures for QA of Joint Programmes Based on the European Approach

During 2024, QQI published procedures for the [Quality Assurance \(QA\) of Joint Programmes based on the European Approach](#). These procedures align with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and aim to ensure the highest standards of quality assurance in joint programmes.

The development of the procedures involved several key steps:

- Consultation: a green paper was published on QQI's website, inviting stakeholders to submit comments or observations.
- Development of templates: using the [impEA project](#) as the basis, templates and process timelines were devised.

- Panel members: an appropriate fee structure was finalised based on QQI's other external evaluation processes.
- Board approval: the procedures were approved by the QQI Board at their April meeting.

The Procedures for QA of Joint Programmes based on the European Approach provide a clear framework for quality assurance and support the continuous improvement of joint programmes. Following establishment of the procedures, QQI can conduct the external evaluation of joint programmes using the European approach. There are two evaluations scheduled for 2025.

Implement the agreed model for validation of ETB shared programmes

During 2024, QQI continued to work with the ETB sector to facilitate the validation and sharing of programmes. This model, which has been in operation since 2021, sees a lead ETB provider submitting a programme for validation and sharing that programme with collaborating ETBs through the differential validation process.

Test and evaluate agreed approach and methodology for review and update of CAS award standards in the field of Healthcare

FET Award Standards in Healthcare

As set out in the Outline Action Plan for Review and Renewal of QQI Common Award Standards, QQI has identified the FET award standards in healthcare at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 as a priority area for review. This work got underway in June 2024 with the establishment of an expert standards review and development group, which includes representation from the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA),



relevant professions, employer representatives and providers. New draft award standards in healthcare are expected to be published for consultation in 2025.

Publish revised templates and guidance for all validation application formats

Revised templates and guidance were published for all validation application formats in April 2024 with the intention of providing additional support and clarity to providers applying for programme validation.

Publish draft QQI award standards L5-L9 template and associated QQI business standards L5-9 for consultation and piloting

In August 2024, QQI published a suite of Integrated Broad Award Standards for Business at NFQ Levels 5-9. The new standards are designed to provide flexibility and support variety in programme design, thereby encouraging innovation within an overall agreed framework. It is intended that these standards will be used as a reference to guide the development of future FET and HE programmes, facilitating the alignment of new programmes with industry needs and contemporary expectations for business programmes.

Review and Update QQI Awards Policy Suite

In August 2024, QQI launched a public consultation on proposed revisions to its *Policy and Criteria for Determining QQI Awards Standards; Policy and Criteria for Provider Approval; Policy and Criteria for Validating Programmes Leading to QQI Awards; and Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*. This suite of interrelated policies collectively constitutes the overarching framework governing the operation of QQI’s awarding body function. Following consideration of the feedback received during the consultation, the updated policies will be published in 2025.

Complete the Reengagement Process

The reengagement process was completed in September 2024. During this process, 28 higher education providers and 109 further education and training providers had their quality assurance procedures and general organisational and academic capacity evaluated and approved by QQI.

Implement post reengagement Annual Monitoring Reporting in FET sector

Providers were notified of their obligation to submit annual reports to QQI following the reengagement process at the end of 2024. Reporting will commence in 2025 and will continue throughout the year. A thematic analysis of reports will be conducted upon completion of the reporting cycle.

Quality Dialogue Meetings (QDMs)

As part of its monitoring function, QQI conducts quality dialogue meetings with both further and higher education institutions. The quality dialogue meetings provide an opportunity for QQI and the institutions to discuss the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance developments and enhancements within the institutions’ internal quality system during the report period.

In 2024 QDMs were held with 11 publicly regulated higher education institutions except for the four newest technological universities and Dundalk Institute of Technology (as these meetings took place in 2023).

Topics discussed at the meetings included strategic updates, follow-up actions arising from CINNTE reviews, academic integrity, the Irish Register of Qualifications, TrustEd Ireland and micro-credentials.

We will assess the effectiveness and embedding of quality assurance within the new and evolving technological universities through our institutional quality reviews

Higher education monitoring and review

During the Covid-19 pandemic, all reviews were conducted online. The more sustainable approach to some elements of the external review process have been retained. Initial briefings of review teams and planning visits are conducted online, with the main review visit being conducted on-site at the institution.

Review of effectiveness of QA of HEIs through CINNTE Review in 2024

The CINNTE review cycle was extended by 12 months to accommodate the review of four newly established technological universities. During this period, institutional reviews were completed for Munster Technological University (MTU), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), South East Technological University (SETU), and Atlantic Technological University (ATU). The reviews for ATU and TUS involved visits by the review teams to campuses in Limerick and Sligo, respectively. MTU’s review was primarily based at its Bishopstown campus in Cork, with one day spent by the review team onsite in the MTU Kerry campus. The review for SETU was

conducted with visits by the review team to both Waterford and Carlow campuses.

Within the extended timeframe for the CINNTE review cycle, the four largest independent/private HEIs; Dublin Business School (DBS), Griffith College (GCD), Hibernia College and the National College of Ireland (NCI) were included for institutional review.

These mature and long established HEIs were prioritised for review on the basis that their quality assurance has been approved for some time following reengagement with QQI. They have been integrated into QQI’s monitoring framework, and they have indicated their intention to seek delegated authority (DA) to make awards when this regulatory framework becomes available.

The relevant terms of reference and handbooks for the CINNTE review of the technological universities and independent/private providers are available on the [QQI website](#).

Details of each review, including the composition of the expert review teams, key dates and the final review report for each HEI are published in [QQI’s Reviews Library](#).

Commence review of effectiveness of QA of private/independent HEIs

Table 2: Cinnte Quality Review Schedule 2024/25

HEI	Main Review Visit	Final Report Published
MTU	11 - 15 Mar 2024	Q3 2024
TUS	15 - 19 Apr 2024	Q3 2024
Dublin Business School	24 – 28 June 2024	Q1 2025
SETU	7 - 11 October 2024	Q1 2025
Hibernia College	7 – 10 October 2024	Q1 2025
Griffith College	21 – 24 October 2024	Q1 2025
ATU	11 - 15 November 2024	Q1 2025
National College of Ireland	2 – 5 December 2024	Q1 2025

The full 2024/25 CINNTE review schedule is also available on the QQI website.

CASE STUDY (IV)
CINNTE REVIEW OF INDEPENDENT/PRIVATE PROVIDERS



INTRODUCTION

In 2024, QQI completed the external quality review of the four largest independent/private HE providers in Ireland. These reviews have been included in QQI’s CINNTE cycle of reviews 2017-2024 which, until this point, had only included the publicly regulated higher education institutions. These four institutions were prioritised based on their intention to seek delegated authority (DA) when it becomes available. These reviews aimed to evaluate the governance structures, teaching, learning, and assessment processes, and self-evaluation mechanisms of the institutions to ensure continuous improvement and excellence in higher education. The CINNTE review process is aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the

European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). However, discrete [terms of reference](#) and a [handbook](#) have been published specifically for the review of independent/private providers.

PURPOSE OF REVIEWS

There are five purposes for CINNTE reviews which can be summarised as follows:

- building QA cultures in HEIs
- providing feedback to HEIs
- contributing to public confidence in higher education
- promoting enhancement through evidence
- promoting system-level enhancement .

The following independent/private HEIs undertook a CINNTE review in 2024:

- Dublin Business School (DBS)
- Griffith College
- Hibernia College
- National College of Ireland (NCI).

OBJECTIVES

The review focused on three primary objectives:

1. Governance and Management: Evaluating the governance structures and management practices of the institutions.
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA): Assessing the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment processes.
3. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring, Review: Reviewing the institutions’ self-evaluation processes and their effectiveness in promoting continuous improvement.

BRIEFING AND CONSULTATION WITH THE INDEPENDENT/PRIVATE HEI SECTOR

QQI consulted with and briefed the independent/private higher education sector on the CINNTE review model and how this would be adapted for this sector through

scheduled sectoral meetings in 2023. For the four HEIs that had committed to undertake institutional review in 2024, QQI held a briefing with senior management to discuss the terms of reference and process for the reviews. An online webinar based on peer learning and experiences was also hosted by QQI for staff in the four HEIs. Finally, each HEI hosted a meeting with QQI to discuss the arrangements specific to their institution and monthly ‘check-in’ meetings were then scheduled in the lead up to and duration of the review.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted ensured a robust and transparent review process fostering a culture of quality enhancement within the independent/private HEIs. The key elements of the methodology are outlined in the terms of reference and included the following:

- An **Institutional Profile (IP)**¹ provided comprehensive information about the institution, its history, structure, mission, vision, strategic goals, governance, management structures, quality approach, staff profile, student profile, and student numbers. This served as an introduction to the review team and was the first document they read.
- The **Self-Evaluation Report (SER)**² was prepared by the provider over a six-to-nine-month period and reflected

1 IP: DBS, Hibernia College, Griffith College, NCI

2 SER: DBS, Hibernia College, Griffith College, NCI

- their quality assurance processes and outcomes
- **External Review Team³:** a separate independent team of international experts and peers conducted the review in each HEI, examining the SER and other relevant documentation including AQRs.
 - **Site Visit:** the review team conducted a site visit at the institution to gather additional evidence, engage with stakeholders, and verify the information provided in the SER.
 - **Stakeholder Engagement** is a key aspect of the review process, and each review team met with a wide range of stakeholders, including students, staff, and external partners, to gain a comprehensive understanding of each institution's quality assurance practices.
 - **A Review Report⁴** was compiled by the review team following the site visit outlining their findings, commendations, and recommendations for improvement.
 - **Follow-Up:** each HEI will be expected to respond to their respective review report and implement the recommendations. QQI monitors the follow-up actions to ensure continuous improvement.

OUTCOMES

The CINNTE review of the four larger independent/private providers has led to several positive outcomes:

- Enhanced quality assurance processes across private HEIs.
- Improved governance and management practices.
- Strengthened teaching, learning, and assessment processes.
- Increased focus on self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

QQI's review of independent/private HEIs in 2024 was a significant step towards ensuring high-quality education in Ireland's independent/private HEI sector. The reviews' findings and recommendations have set the stage for continuous improvement and excellence in higher education.

³ Review Teams: [DBS](#), [Hibernia College](#), [Griffith College](#), [NCI](#)

⁴ Review Report: [DBS](#). The other reports are pending publication and will be available on the QQI website in [QQI's Reviews Library](#) in due course.

We will stimulate autonomous universities to demonstrate how effectively they are monitoring and improving the quality of the learner experience, research and community engagement

Establish new tertiary quality monitoring policy

Development commenced in 2024 on a new QQI monitoring policy and framework, reflecting obligations of both QQI and providers of new legislative functions under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, and a new context for monitoring. The framework presents a structured and integrated approach to monitoring across QQI's regulatory functions and providers within the tertiary education and training system. A white paper on the monitoring policy and framework is planned for consultation in Quarter 1, 2025.

The National Framework for Doctoral Education (NFDE) Advisory Forum

The National Framework for Doctoral Education Advisory Forum, co-chaired by QQI and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), expanded its membership in 2024 to include all higher education institutions offering doctoral education programmes in Ireland and increased student representation. The updated membership structure reflected the changes in the inclusion of more institutional decision makers across the doctoral education landscape in the Forum. In line with membership changes, the forum also agreed an updated terms of reference.

Progress from NFDE Advisory Forum working groups

The postgraduate student engagement working group finalised its postgraduate student engagement report in 2024. On approval by the advisory forum, the report was then presented to the National Student Engagement Network (NStEP) with the aim of establishing a postgraduate student engagement network.

The Career Tracking Working Group progressed its work to develop a proposal for the development of a national postgraduate researcher career tracking project. To inform the work of this group, the HEA collaborated with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on a pilot project, the outcomes of which will be reported in 2025. More information about the [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#) and the NFDE Advisory Forum is available on QQI's website.

Annual Quality Reporting (AQR)

In 2024, QQI published the annual quality reports (AQRs) for higher education institutions, covering the reporting period 2022-23. For this period, all publicly regulated HEIs continued to submit AQRs. For independent/private HEIs, the size and diversity of institutions, as well as plans to review the existing monitoring framework, meant that only those HEIs intending to seek DA were required to submit an AQR for this reporting period. In total, AQRs were received from 16 publicly regulated HEIs and the National University of Ireland (NUI) and six independent/private HEIs (four of which intend to seek DA and two voluntarily submitted AQRs). All AQRs are published in the [reviews library](#) on the QQI website.

QQI has continued to produce synthesis reports of the AQRs as part of its *Insights Series*. The synthesis of quality in higher education identifies key themes arising across the AQRs in quality development and enhancement activities reported by the institutions. The synthesis reports highlight and disseminate good practice and identify key areas of focus for the higher education sector during the designated reporting period.

The synthesis of the 2024 AQRs was published in a single report including the AQRs from both public and independent/private HEIs to reflect on the HE sector as a whole and take account of the small number of reports from independent/private HEIs. This synthesis [report](#) is available on QQI's website.

QQI has also continued to develop and enhance the database of case studies taken from the AQRs of both public and independent/private HEIs. This resource provides rich evidence of quality assurance in action and is a valuable QA resource for sharing good practice and initiatives. This [database](#) is available through the QQI website.

In order to share more widely the sectoral findings of the AQR evaluation, to facilitate peer learning for higher education staff and to showcase areas of good practice in quality assurance and enhancement practices across the HE sector, QQI hosted an event, [Quality in HE: Sectoral Findings & Enhancement Showcase 2024](#), in October 2024. This event brought key stakeholders together and proved popular with stakeholders across the tertiary sector.

Priority 4 #insight - publishing authoritative analysis and insight

We will evaluate the experience of remote and blended learning and provide guidance on authentic assessment for an improved learner experience and outcome

Evaluate providers' quality assurance with regard to statutory QA Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Programmes

The process for providers wishing to submit applications for extension of their scope of provision to provide programmes using blended and fully online methodologies commenced in 2024. A process guide and associated templates were developed and issued in November. Providers wishing to apply, submitted expressions of interest in December 2024. First applications for approval were received in late December and it is envisaged that the first two applications for extension of scope will conclude in early 2025. The extension of scope process will continue throughout 2025 into Quarter 1, 2026.

We will publish system-level analyses and host enhancement events including an annual summit event with key stakeholders on a key strategic theme embracing quality and qualifications

QQI Biennial Conference: Leading and Learning in a Changing Landscape

The QQI biennial conference '[Leading and Learning in a Changing Landscape](#)' was held on 21 November 2024. The conference was chaired by Professor Irene Sheridan, Head of Extended Campus, Munster Technological University and Chairperson of the QQI Board.

The conference featured representatives from across Ireland's tertiary education system in addition to leading international experts.

Following an opening address from Dr Padraig Walsh, Chief Executive, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the [QQI Statement of Strategy 2025-27](#) 'Looking after learner interests' was launched by Keith Moynes, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Professor Danny Liu, University of Sydney, was the keynote speaker at the conference exploring 'CRAFTing our way towards a future with GenAI'. Professor Liu's presentation was followed by a panel discussion chaired by Dr Bryan Maguire, Director of Integration, QQI, featuring approaches to GenAI developments in Irish tertiary education. Panellists included:

- Professor Alan Smeaton, Professor of Computing, Dublin City University and member of Ireland's Advisory Council on Artificial Intelligence,
- Dr Brendan Ryan, Technology Enhanced Learning Support Service, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board,
- Rebecca Roper, Expert Advisor for Teaching and Learning, Higher Education Authority: Student Success and N-TUTORR Project Lead, GenAI Champions Project

- Evelyn Cooper, student, South East Technological University and contributor to N-TUTORR GenAI Champions Project.

Reflections on alignment approaches to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) also featured at the 2024 conference and was presented by Dr Elaine Boyd, Senior Teaching Fellow, Institute of Education, University College London, Mary Grennan, Head of International Education, QQI and Thom Kiddle, Director, Norwich Institute for Language Education.

Marking the 5th anniversary of the establishment of the National Academic Integrity Network, Dr Irene Glendinning, former Academic Integrity Lead for Coventry University Group, UK and independent researcher in academic and research integrity, spoke to the audience about addressing current academic integrity threats. Following this, a report on an impact evaluation of NAIN was presented by Sue Hackett, independent education consultant. A panel discussion was led by NAIN Chair, Billy Kelly with members of the NAIN Steering Group and Network: Aisling Reast, Head of Quality Enhancement Office, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Greg O'Brien, Senior Educational Technologist, Griffith College and Dr Mary-Claire Kennedy, Academic Integrity Lead, University of Limerick.

Senior leaders' perspectives were shared by Professor Veronica Campbell, South East Technological University, Dr Lindsay Malone, Director of Further Education and Training, Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board and Ruth Ní Bheoláin, Dean of Academic Affairs, CCT Dublin. Professor

Campbell shared insights into institutional transformation at SETU. Dr Malone described the evolution of FET and how FET will ensure that learners' qualifications support their future capabilities. Ms. Ní Bheoláin offered a perspective on navigating dynamic sectoral change through collaboration.

Tom Lowe, Assistant Head of School (Student Experience) in Finance and Accounting, University of Westminster, explored how we can better respond to changing student behaviours and foster engagement. His presentation was followed by a panel chaired by Rachael Sarsfield Ryan, Development Coordinator, National Student Engagement Programme and included: Chris Clifford, President, Union of Students in Ireland, Rumbidzai Gandiwa, Munster Technological University and Thomas Ryan, FET Student Council, Tipperary Education and Training Board.

Andrina Wafer, Head of International Mobility and Prior Learning, QQI, presented to delegates on automatic recognition and responding to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, highlighting four related ENIC-NARIC Erasmus+ projects.

The conference also included presentations from colleagues at higher education institutions leading the eight QQI-funded research projects on rethinking assessment which were funded as part of QQI's 10th anniversary programme in 2022. Presentations included:

- Assessment Identity, Academic Integrity and Ethical Practice: Professor Marie Clarke, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, University College Dublin and Dr Deirdre Stritch, independent education and QA consultant

- Real Exploration of Assessment and Learning (REAL) using Sophisticated Toolkits across NFQ Levels: Dr Cormac Quigley, Senior Lecturer in Forensic and Chemical Sciences, Atlantic Technological University and Dr Etain Kiely, lecturer in maths and statistics
- An investigation into the use of technology-enhanced simulation as an integrative authentic assessment approach on a blended learning professional programme: Patricia Nunan, Programme Director (Post-Primary), Hibernia College
- UDL designed authentic assessment as preventative measure of Academic Misconduct: Dr Susan Gottlöber, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy, Maynooth University
- External Peer Review of Assessment: Dr Sinead O'Sullivan, Director of Quality, University of Limerick
- A Cost-Benefit Analysis of using the ICAI-McCabe Survey to Measure Beliefs and Knowledge about Academic Integrity in Irish Higher Education: Dr Andrew Gibson, Assistant Professor, Education, Trinity College Dublin
- Interactive Oral Assessment: a model for robust and authentic assessment design: Dr Monica Ward, Dean of Teaching and Learning and Dr Martina Crehan, Head of Teaching Enhancement Unit, Dublin City University
- A programme-based approach to building authenticity into Assessment and Feedback processes through consultation with Professional and Regulatory Bodies: Nicole O'Neill, Education Innovation Manager, and Derek Dodd, Academic Developer, Technological University Dublin.

- More information on the [grant aided projects](#) can be found on the QQI website.

QQI also hosted three pre-conference events on 20 November 2024, including masterclasses on academic integrity with Dr Irene Glendinning, rethinking assessment with Professor Danny Liu and a workshop on a revised QQI Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) Policy led by QQI.

Research Supervision: Growing Excellence Symposium

QQI co-sponsored the Irish University Association (IUA) Dean of Graduate Studies Symposium with the IUA 'Future Excellence in Doctoral Supervision', which was hosted by Dublin City University in May 2024.

The symposium considered the contemporary landscape of European doctoral supervision and professional development for the supervisor and institutions. The refreshed [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#) was presented on the day.

The symposium included a masterclass in supervision, a discussion celebrating diversity in postgraduate research in Ireland and considered the impact of GenAI on academic integrity and supervision.

QA guidelines on work-integrated learning

Throughout 2024, QQI continued its work with a project team to develop a new set of topic-specific statutory quality assurance guidelines for programmes that includes work-integrated learning. It is anticipated that the guidelines will encompass a broad spectrum of provision, for example: work experience; apprenticeship; internship; professional practice placement; traineeship and work-based projects.

An important objective in the development of the guidelines is that they are responsive to current practice in Irish FET and HE. The first phase of this work started in 2024 and involved engaging with education and training providers; educators involved in the provision of work-integrated learning; learners; employers; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and other stakeholders to understand their views, experiences and interests in work-integrated learning.

Develop the scope of a project to consider the threats and opportunities for tertiary education arising from artificial intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Snapshot

In 2024, QQI commenced a project to support our understanding of the implications of GenAI for the Irish tertiary education system. For providers of education and training, GenAI has potentially wide-ranging implications for their operations, including the appropriateness of curricula and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment; quality assurance arrangements; policy and procedure; engagement with and responsiveness to disciplinary and industry developments; staff recruitment and development; and technological and legal infrastructure.

The first data collection phase of the project began in December 2024. Data on the views, uses and responses of key stakeholders across the sector to developments in GenAI were sought. As part of this, QQI was keen to hear from learners and staff in Irish further, higher and English language education via online surveys. QQI also requested information from providers of education and training on organisational considerations and responses.

Following analysis of these inputs, QQI will publish a report in 2025 providing a snapshot

of the findings and we plan to collect further data in the coming years to help understand how the impacts evolve over time.

Five Key Areas of Action on Generative AI and Assessment

On 20 November 2024, QQI held Rethinking Assessment: Five Key Areas of Action on GenAI and Assessment, the latest in QQI’s Rethinking Assessment Masterclass and Events series.

Led by Professor Danny Liu of the University of Sydney, this in-person masterclass explored five key areas of action that can help providers focus their resources when addressing challenges and opportunities of GenAI and assessment.

Through practical examples of approaches to AI in assessment, the session included a deep dive into the roles of coherent rules, equitable access, levels of familiarity, fostering trust, and building culture in helping providers progress towards a responsible and productive engagement with GenAI.

RETHINKING ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

Rethinking Assessment of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL): Authenticity, Inclusivity and Sustainability

Assessment design is not an easy or straightforward process and the complexity of this increases when considering the range of stakeholders involved in work-integrated learning. Learners, educators, and workplaces are likely to have a range of goals and objectives, some of which can be in tension. Assessment must co-ordinate across these competing tensions, and yet do something more: promote and assure learning in a consistent way.

This in-person [masterclass](#), delivered on 18 April 2024 by Dr Joanna Tai, Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) in Deakin University in Australia, focused on three important design considerations for assessment, drawing on recent conceptual literature and empirical research: authenticity (with respect to stakeholder perspectives), inclusivity (for diverse learners, and to promote an inclusive society), and sustainability (for workplaces, educators, and assuring learners’ capabilities beyond their current educational context).

The objectives were:

- 1. To appreciate the tensions and challenges in assessment design for WIL.
- 2. To discuss priorities in assessment design with respect to authenticity, inclusivity, and sustainability.
- 3. To identify opportunities for refining assessment design for WIL with key stakeholders.

Rethinking Assessment: Inclusive Assessment and Standards in a Dynamic and Changing World

On 17 April 2024, QQI, AHEAD and the Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) hosted a conference on “*Rethinking Assessment: Inclusive Assessment and Standards in a Dynamic and Changing World*”.

The aim of this event was to encourage teaching/academic staff, leaders, academic and learner support staff, and learners from the further and higher education sectors, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, to reflect on the validity of their preferred approaches to assessment of learners’ achievement of intended learning outcomes (i.e., standards) and, in doing so, to reflect on

how students are affected, whether those standards and assessment approaches need to be more inclusive and, if so, how to make them more inclusive.

Those who participated heard from national and international experts on:

- the challenges to inclusive assessment and standards in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment contexts
- the impacts where assessment and standards are not inclusive
- how we might respond to the challenges and opportunities presented.

The event also featured case studies of innovative practice in inclusive assessment and standards from across further and higher education.

Rethinking Assessment of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education

This workshop which took place on 30 January explored the context for, and challenges in, the use of learning outcomes in an Irish higher education context and it advanced participants’ expertise in the development and assessment of learning outcomes. It was aimed at individuals involved in assessment, in programme development and review, and in quality assurance. These included academic staff and external examiners.

Rethinking Assessment of Learning Outcomes in FET

This workshop held on 29 January explored the context for, and challenges in, the use of learning outcomes in an Irish further education and training context and develop participants’ expertise in the development and assessment of learning outcomes. It was aimed at individuals involved in assessment (including practitioners and external authenticators),

programme development and review, and quality assurance.

Rethinking Assessment: Analysis of variation on honours bachelor’s degree classifications 2012-2022

QQI and the other degree awarding bodies have been collaborating on an analysis to understand the causes of variation in the classification profile of honours bachelor’s degrees over the past decade and to provide greater clarity on the purposes and meaning of degree classification for the general public and other key stakeholders. Terms of reference for the study, agreed in July 2023, include the completion of programmatic case studies and the provision of data on classification practices by higher education institutions, followed by a meta-analysis of programme and institutional data by QQI. QQI continues to work with the CSO on the analysis of relevant quantitative data. The case studies took longer to complete than originally expected. A report of the findings of this analysis is expected in 2025.

Rethinking Assessment: Interim updates of FET assessment guidelines

In August 2024, QQI published a proposed interim update of [QQI’s Quality Assuring Assessment Interim Guidelines For Providers and Quality Assuring Assessment Interim Guidelines For External Authentication](#). Following consideration of the consultation responses, the updated guidelines will be published in 2025.

Quality in HE: Sectoral Findings & Enhancement Showcase 2024

QQI’s annual quality reporting (AQR) process provides a unique window into the broad spectrum of quality assurance and enhancement activity across the Irish higher education system.

On 2 October 2024, QQI hosted its second annual event to showcase a selection of the quality enhancement case studies submitted by higher education institutions as part of the AQR process in 2024.

This in-person event, taking place in the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Dublin, provided opportunities for reflection and peer learning for higher education staff from across the public and private/independent sectors on a diverse range of quality enhancement initiatives.

Enhancement activities in this year’s AQRs encompassed a wide range of themes, including:

- enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment
- digitisation and the use of data in quality enhancement
- widening access to higher education
- a keynote address by Professor Claire Hamshire, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education & Student Experience, University of Salford: *“Taking a long view towards quality improvement: an intentional approach to solving wicked problems and improving student experience”*
- a thematic overview of annual quality reporting in 2024
- an opportunity for attendees to contribute to a workshop on QQI’s future approach to quality monitoring.

We will conduct system-level analyses of the outcomes of further and higher education quality reviews to inform new and innovative approaches to institutional quality assurance.

Publish a thematic analysis of the action plans and follow-up reports arising from the inaugural review of quality assurance in ETBs

The Research and Innovation division supported Tertiary Education Monitoring and Review Unit(TEMRU) in the production of a [synthesis of the ETB follow-up reports](#) to the inaugural QA review process.

CASE STUDY (V)
ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH THE SYNTHESIS REPORT ON QUALITY IN ETBS



BACKGROUND

In 2021/2022, QQI conducted an Inaugural Review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance policies and procedures established by the 16 education and training boards (ETBs). Following the completion and publication of the reports from these reviews, each ETB was required to submit a follow-up report detailing the progress achieved in addressing recommendations made in their Inaugural Review report. To enhance the learning from the follow-up reports and highlight good practice across the sector, a synthesis report identifying key themes arising across the 16 follow-up reports was produced.

METHODOLOGY

The follow-up reports submitted by the 16 ETBs in response to the Inaugural Review process were reviewed, noting the themes and topics included in the reports and submitted case studies. The collated information was synthesised to produce a report that presents an overview of themes and offers an insight into the continuing impact of the Inaugural Review in the twelve months after completion.

KEY THEMES

The synthesis report identifies several key themes and topics, as well as some key initiatives implemented by ETBs in response to recommendations made in the review reports. Core themes identified across the

follow-up reports include enhancements to QA governance, stakeholder engagement, amplification of the learner voice, enhanced data management, and the promotion of continuous professional development (CPD) to enhance the learning experience. Strong examples of collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and striving for an external perspective are prevalent in the reports. The commitment to amplifying and capturing the learner voice is evident in the reports.

IMPACT

The Inaugural Review process marked a significant milestone for quality in the ETB sector. The synthesis report reflects a sector evolving and developing its management and enhancement of quality assurance and continuously embedding a quality culture. The report concludes that there is a strong commitment to the ongoing development of quality across the sector, with many planned activities and actions implemented. The strengthening and organisation of ETBs' relationships with regional industry partners and employers is particularly evident. Quality assurance, its management, enhancement, and oversight, continues to evolve and develop within ETBs.

POSITIVE RECEPTION

QQI's [synthesis report](#) has been positively received by stakeholders. It has been noted for its comprehensive analysis and the valuable insights it provides into the sector's quality assurance practices. QQI continues to work with ETBs in promoting continuous improvement and fostering a culture of quality.

Quality in Higher Education 2024

In October, QQI published its annual thematic analysis of the annual quality reports (AQRs) submitted by Irish higher education institutions (HEIs). Quality in Higher Education 2024 identifies themes emerging from 2024 reporting by public and private/independent HEIs for the 2022/23 reporting year.

The report also includes a system-level analysis, which identifies trends of note across the sector. Key themes emerging from the 2024 AQRs include:

- Reporting on the augmentation of facilities and substantial investments in digital infrastructure suggest that investments to enable technology-enhanced teaching and learning are an ongoing strategic priority for the sector. Whilst digitisation is a significant theme, few AQRs refer to the development, governance or implementation of whole-of-institution IT/digital strategies and plans.
- A number of HEIs reported on the implementation or continued development of systems and tools specifically designed to facilitate data-informed decision-making. Examples included the use of dashboards to inform activities ranging from recruitment and admissions through to learner support and programme delivery.
- Following the release of ChatGPT during the reporting period, the AQRs evidence multifaceted responses by HEIs to the threats posed by GenAI to academic integrity. Reports from several institutions also indicate that HEIs are actively seeking to harness the opportunities AI presents, e.g. through the use of chatbots and AI tools to enhance service provision and enable efficiencies.

- Responsiveness to the needs of enterprise and industry remains an important driver within the sector, influencing programme development, research partnerships and knowledge transfer activities.
- A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is also evident across multiple dimensions of reporting, including the influence of inclusive practice in teaching, learning and assessment; programme portfolio development; and the provision of learning and development for staff in diversity-related areas.
- Sustainability continues to be a notable feature of strategic plans and priorities within HEIs, influencing industry partnerships, resource allocation, research funding, the built environment and programme design.

A [presentation](#) of the system-level overview of the 2024 higher level AQRs is available to view on YouTube.

Key Enabler 1 #partnership - strengthening strategic partnerships to effect system change

We will inform and influence education and training policy through our relationships with government, public funders, providers and other stakeholders

Support strategic discussions and engagements through the Irish Quality and Qualifications Forum (IQQF). Expand IQQF membership beyond initial subgroup of statutory awarding bodies.

Senior representatives from Irish based statutory awarding bodies, including QQI, met in October 2024 as a subgroup of the Irish Quality and Qualifications Forum. The meeting included a significant discussion on the future direction of quality assurance in higher education with a presentation from Professor Paul Giller, MRIA, Emeritus Professor of Ecology, University College Cork. Other discussions referenced the European Higher Education Package in the context of recognition issues, the titling of non-major awards and upcoming QQI-led projects regarding the National Framework of Qualifications.

Publish a new HEA/QQI statutory agreement and maintain engagement accordingly (MoU)

Memoranda of Understanding (MoU)

QQI communicates and partners with national and international agencies and organisations

across tertiary education, under the terms agreed in its MoUs. In 2024, a national MoU was renewed with SOLAS and international MoUs were renewed with The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA).

Develop a communications strategy to support, maintain and promote a better understanding of qualifications recognition and the role of the NARIC service within it.

Country Education Profiles - proving high quality national information to support recognition.

Recognising the demand for increased high-quality information to inform recognition decisions by academic recognition bodies, statutory professional bodies and employers, NARIC Ireland commissioned research into the information need and demand for specific Country Education Profiles. Ten profiles were commissioned for development, and additionally one for Ireland to inform researchers and policy makers from overseas, giving a comprehensive and up to date picture of the national education and qualifications system. These are undergoing quality assurance, both internally and by the authorities of the relevant jurisdictions, and upon completion, they will be published in 2025.

We will assist in the development of mechanisms for effective learner engagement in the quality of their education and training through our work with learner representative and advocacy bodies

Our work with learners

QQI continued to engage with learner representatives across its functions and programmes of engagement in 2024. This included engagement directly with representative bodies, including the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and participation in the National FET Learner Forum, hosted by AONTAS. QQI also re-committed to its sponsorship of the AONTAS STAR Awards 2025 in the Learner Voice category, as per previous years.

National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)

Since its establishment in 2016, the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) has been supported by a partnership between QQI, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and USI. A number of staffing changes occurred in 2024, including the appointment of a new NStEP Manager to steer the programme into its next strategic phase.

Student Training Programme

To commence academic year 2023-2024, NStEP held its annual 'Train the Trainer' event in August 2023 preparing student trainers to deliver its Student Training Programme sessions. NStEP delivered 52 student training sessions, training 659 students across all of its training modules (including self-study modules). This brought the total number of students trained by NStEP to 6,998. The breakdown of trainings delivered is as follows:

- Introductory Class Rep Training – 42 sessions – 478 students trained.
- Advanced Class Rep Training – 6 sessions – 61 students trained.
- Representing Diversity Training – 4 sessions - 47 students trained.
- Online self-study modules – 73 students trained.

Student Engagement Case Study Hub

The NStEP Student Engagement Case Study Hub continued to expand in 2024. In its most recent call, NStEP received submissions from institutions across a variety of themes:

- Student-staff Partnership in Action
- Student Engagement in Teaching and Learning Enhancement
- Student Partnership Approaches to Assessment
- Developing Student-Led Peer Support.

The successful applications were published on the Case Study Hub in May 2024.

Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Belonging Project

The Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Belonging project continued to progress throughout 2024, following public consultation in 2023. Further focus groups with student representatives and Students Union officers were held at the USI annual Congress in March 2024. Two surveys (one each for students and staff) were developed and launched to collect further information specific to Irish HEIs on student engagement, wellbeing and belonging.

NStEP's contribution to the Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Belonging Project ended in May 2024 with the departure of the Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Belonging Development Coordinator. The project is continuing to be developed by the Higher Education Authority under the remit of Healthy Campus Ireland.

Class Rep Census Project

This project provided NStEP with a snapshot of the diversity of student representation in Irish

Higher Education by directly asking students to share more information about themselves and any issues or conditions that may be affecting their learning or learning activities. The Project survey questions have been embedded into the Introductory Class Representative Training Feedback form. The [Census Project Report 2023/24](#) outline the survey results.

National Student Engagement Network Event

On 28 November 2024, NStEP welcomed staff and students from higher education institutions to the National College of Ireland for a National Student Engagement Network Event. The theme of this event was ‘Engage, Empower, Elevate: Transforming the Student Experience’ and attendees heard from staff and students across the sector, including the keynote speaker, Rebecca Roper, Student Success Project, HEA. Ms Roper focused on the importance of student-led change and student leadership initiatives, the need for diverse perspectives in shaping inclusive educational environments, how student engagement has changed post-pandemic and the need to adapt engagement strategies to meet the needs of students in a rapidly changing world, and student mental health and wellbeing.

Student Engagement in Quality Assurance Activities

Student Reviewer requests were received steadily throughout the academic year 2023/2024 and student reviewers continue to be highly sought after. The call for new Student Quality Assurance Reviewers (SQARs) ran during July and August 2024. More than 70 student reviewers participated in the Pool for 2024/25. SQAR Training was held in October 2024, and was co-delivered by NStEP, QQI and USI.

New NStEP Partnerships

NStEP welcomed a new partnering institution, Holmes Institution Dublin, in December 2024, bringing the number of NStEP partnered institutions to 26.

In the second half of 2024, NStEP began working closely with Student Volunteer Ireland to promote and develop the leadership capabilities of the students elected to a Student Advisory Panel. NStEP delivered an online Introductory Student Engagement and Representation session with the students elected to the Advisory Panel in November 2024.

NStEP welcomes interest from other higher education institutions which may wish to join the programme.

We will drive capacity-building in the Education and Training Boards in strategic partnership with funding authorities, provider representative bodies and other stakeholders

Participate in Transforming Learning (FET strategy) steering groups and supporting working groups

The Transforming Learning (FET Strategy Implementation) Steering Group is the group established to track the implementation of the FET Strategy 2020-24. The steering group contains representation from DFHERIS, SOLAS, ETBI (represented by membership from the ETB Chief Executives Group) and QQI.

During 2024, QQI was represented by the Chief Executive, Pdraig Walsh and Walter Balfe (Head of Quality Assurance, Awards Directorate), who attended the meetings of

the group in February, March, May, July and November.

We will contribute to reducing overlap in programme evaluation practices by working with professional and statutory regulatory bodies and higher education institutions

Finding Common Ground – QQI’s engagement with Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

QQI continued its Finding Common Ground programme of engagement with PSRBs in 2024 with three events (two online events, and one in-person). Topics discussed included reasonable accommodations, inclusive assessment and standards, continuing professional development, an update on the development of work-integrated learning quality assurance guidelines, the role of artificial intelligence in professions and professional education, online assessment and the challenges and opportunities for listed awarding bodies and professionally regulated programmes.

There were also further endorsements of the Principles for Professional Engagements with Education Providers during the year. These principles aim to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all actors involved in professional and academic accreditation and to reduce unnecessary administrative burden arising from duplication or overlap between such processes.

We will continue to influence and contribute to good practice in quality assurance and qualifications through deepening our strategic relationships with partner agencies in Europe and worldwide

Engage with key stakeholders involved in recognition on current thinking, practice and implementation

Working in partnership globally, an authoritative voice

NARIC Ireland staff continued to participate actively as part of the European and global recognition networks including co-presenting with the European Commission on the European Universities Alliances, European Degree, Quality Assurance and Recognition at the ENIC-NARIC Joint Meeting in Naples, Italy. At the TAICEP Annual Conference, in Quebec City, Canada, NARIC Ireland presented on “Changes in Accreditation in the United States and Beyond: Implications for Recognition Around the World” and “How National Qualification Frameworks are utilised”. Contributions were also made in collaboration with ENQA and in the context of the work of the Bologna Thematic Peer Group promoting effective distributed recognition systems, building capacity across systems, deepening effective automatic mutual recognition arrangements and supporting recognition for refugees and displaced people in close partnership with institutional leads.

What are the BIG IDEAS in recognition in 2024?

The three big challenges facing recognition in every sector, whether as an employer, an academic institution or a professional body arise in the recognition of micro-credentials,

strengthening mobility through Automatic Recognition across the European Higher Education Area, including for qualifications giving access to higher education, and in recognising the qualifications and periods of learning of refugees, migrants and people who are displaced. NARIC Ireland participated in Erasmus+ funded projects with ENIC-NARIC partners; Information Centre of Academic Mobility and Equivalences (CIMEA), Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation (NUFFIC) and the Academic Information Centre (AIC) Latvia to develop guidelines and supports in the relevant fields.

- **OCTRA 2⁵** explored further the role of online course catalogues of higher education institutions (HEI) in the project countries with a special focus on the micro-credentials to ensure support to HEIs in providing reliable information for recognition about higher education (HE) qualifications including micro-credentials that in future may lead to automatic recognition of HE qualifications. A Comparative Report and Guidelines were published.
- **MARTe⁶** aimed to verify the practical application of automatic recognition to micro-credentials, using text mining technology to a wide range of micro credentials including from Irish higher education institutions. The project further tested recognition of nonformal, stackable micro credentials nationally and internationally, integrating the Micro-Evaluator tool. The project contributed to the development of a more efficient system responding to the recognition

needs of both academic and labour market actors.

- **AR25⁷** – Automatic Recognition in the European Education Area (EEA), 2025 aims to support the creation of the European Education Area by 2025 through a range of actions including supporting the Spotlight Self-Assessment tool. QQI provided webinars integrating the TrustEd Ireland Code of Practice which includes a requirement of compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, showcasing the Spotlight Self-Assessment tool. Work in this project also contributed to the revised European Area of Recognition Manual (EAR) with specific focus on supporting Automatic Recognition.
- **ARAQUA⁸** explored and mapped qualifications giving access to higher education in the project partner countries and published recommendations for NARICs and higher education institutions for their automatic recognition among the countries.

Ireland continued close collaboration with the Council of Europe and credential evaluators in FET and HE institutions nationally in providing access to the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees⁹. By the end of 2024, a total of 14 institutions and 24 participants nationally have engaged with the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) training. QQI continues to provide a ‘soft’ network for these participants.

[Complete ENQA Review of QQI \(site visit, report and responses statement.\)](#)

⁵ OCTRA 2, online course catalogues

⁶ MARTe - CIMEA

⁷ AR25 (2023-2025) | Nuffic

⁸ ARAQUA, automatic recognition, access qualifications

⁹ European Qualifications Passport for Refugees - Education

CASE STUDY (VI)

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW OF QQI



The ENQA Board concluded that QQI is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) underwent a targeted external review coordinated by ENQA with a visit by an external panel in February 2024. The review evaluated whether and how QQI meets the expectations of the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance](#) (ESG) in the European Higher Education Areas (EHEA).

WHAT IS A TARGETED REVIEW?

A targeted review is a streamlined evaluation process designed by ENQA for quality

assurance agencies that have already demonstrated compliance with the ESG. (QQI underwent two previous reviews by ENQA in 2014 and 2019). A targeted review focuses on an area of the ESG which the agency has identified for further enhancement.

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

The development of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) is the first main stage in the review process. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the agency's activities under review, their compliance with the ESG and outlines any changes or developments since the last [review](#). For QQI's targeted review, the SAR was developed through a consultative process involving extensive collaboration with staff and stakeholders. This approach ensured that the

SAR was not only comprehensive, but also an honest reflection of QQI's progress since the last review and on the focus areas for enhancement.

FOCUS AREA ESG 3.4: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

For the targeted review QQI selected ESG standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis as the focus area for enhancement. Thematic analysis is a key strategic focus for QQI.

'As a quality assurance agency, QQI is concerned not just with the quality in individual institutions but at the level of the tertiary system'. (QQI SAR, p.24).

VISIT BY THE EXTERNAL PANEL

In February 2024, an external review panel chaired by Ulf Hedbjörk, Senior Analyst at the Swedish Higher Education Authority visited QQI to conduct the review. During their visit, the panel met with a wide range of QQI staff and external stakeholders, including representatives of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Higher Education Authority, higher education institutions and their representative bodies, student representatives, evaluators and reviewers, and other stakeholders.

External Panel Findings

In its report, the ENQA review panel found that QQI is substantially compliant with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality

Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The findings of the review panel highlighted several key areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement. The panel noted that QQI's processes were clearly defined, consistently implemented, and published, which contributed to the assurance and enhancement of quality in higher education providers.

The review panel commended QQI for its thematic analysis work and appreciated QQI's broader approach to thematic analysis, which went beyond the minimum requirements of ESG 3.4. The review panel also highlighted QQI's strong engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, the agency's commitment to continuous improvement and its proactive approach to addressing recommendations from previous reviews. The panel also identified some challenges and encouraged QQI 'to continue to develop a review model suitable to the group of independent/private providers not yet included in cyclical institutional review activity' (p.35).

OUTCOME: APPROVAL OF QQI MEMBERSHIP OF ENQA

Following the successful review, the ENQA Board approved QQI's continued membership, reaffirming its position as a leading quality assurance agency in higher education.

Key enabler 2
#excellence -
building organisational
excellence

We will develop and provide opportunities for our people by continuing to build an agile, engaged, responsive and motivated workforce

Implement and enhance staff wellbeing programme in line with KeepWell Mark recommendations and our standing as a top 100 company for wellbeing

QQI continues to be included in the 'Top 100 Companies' leading in wellbeing listings and is committed to embedding a safe and healthy work environment that places the wellbeing of employees at the forefront of company policy. This commitment is clear not only from our achievement of the KeepWell Mark but also from our continual improvement in reaching the standards set by IBEC which culminated in QQI achieving Company of the Year (SME) in 2024. The award recognises our commitment to continuous improvement, and our aspiration to be an employer of choice.

Continue implementation of succession planning, talent development, organisational resilience action plans and capability framework

QQI has implemented the capability framework in recruitment campaigns with the objective of enhancing an agile and responsive workforce to meet the future needs of the organisation. QQI continues to strengthen a learning and development culture by investing in and

encouraging lifelong learning for all staff and providing opportunities for staff to contribute to internal and external committees and projects.

Complete the implementation of the Human Resources (HR) strategy to support delivery of the Statement of Strategy 2022-24 and plan for the new Statement of Strategy 2025-2027

HR has achieved the objectives set out in the HR Strategy 2022-24. The drafting of the HR Strategy 2025-2027 was completed in collaboration with the Staff Engagement Focus Group and the Executive Management Team (EMT) before being presented to the QQI Board for final approval in December 2024.

We will reimagine the QQI workplace through utilising ICT for remote and blended working and embedding sustainability in our work processes

Complete the ICT strategy implementation in support of QQI's 2022-2024 Strategy and plan for the new Statement of Strategy 2025-2027

QQI ICT continued work on implementing its ICT strategy for 2022-2024, focusing on staff learning, engagement, and data insights. Seven out of ten deliverables were completed, with work ongoing on the remaining three. Development activities continued for the amended legislation programme, which allowed for the TrustEd Ireland application window opening in October 2024. The office space now supports a blended working environment, and cybersecurity has been enhanced with the Security Operations Centre (SOC)/Security Information and Event

Management (SIEM) renewal, pen testing, and technical upgrades. Significant progress has been made in planning preparation for the upgrade of the staff intranet and document management system, with a full project planned for 2025. The new system will allow staff to easily access important information, collaborate on projects, and share resources efficiently while providing robust data security and compliance, reducing the risks associated with data breaches and ensuring that sensitive information is well-protected. Development of a new IT strategy for 2025-2027 commenced in 2024.

Further enhance and strengthen cyber security resulting from external security review and develop security metrics dashboard for tracking risk identification and remediation

Throughout 2024, we continued to enhance our security measures, with scheduled security assessments revealing a significant reduction

in vulnerabilities. We renewed our external Security Operations Centre (SOC) service. Our SOC/SIEM functions as a robust defence mechanism, capable of effectively detecting, responding to, and mitigating security incidents.

Amendments to follow best practices and strengthen Application Programming Interface (API) and identity security against new threats were made in 2024. We maintained QQI staff security awareness through training, regular communications, and phishing simulations throughout the year.

ICT Achievements in 2024

In 2024, we implemented 84 features and 479 business user stories across 37 applications, including significant technical upgrades like SQL Server encryption. We conducted 35 demonstrations to gather feedback and ensure changes met expectations. Our team completed 9,504 tasks and 121 releases,



Figure 3: ICT in numbers 2024

developing 225,000 lines of new code and conducting 1,097 code review tasks. Quality assurance efforts identified 251 bugs in production, included 10 performance tests, and implemented 132 automated tests, saving 287 hours of manual QA efforts. We applied 16,105 security patches, performed 2 penetration and 2 vulnerability tests, and addressed 152 vulnerabilities. Operations success included reducing health check alerts from 344 to 120, managing 17,000 infrastructure calls, and resolving 2,000 user-generated tickets. We rebranded 13 systems, requiring over 1,500 hours of work, and initiated database encryption projects.

These ICT achievements underscore our commitment to enhancing our infrastructure, security, and user experience throughout 2024.

We will work with the Department to ensure that QQI has stable, predictable and sustainable income streams

Introduce and monitor cost recovery for Amended Legislation Programme (ALP) functions and continue engagement with DFHERIS on hybrid funding model (service-led and relationship type funding)

In Quarter 3, the ALP related fees and charges were approved by the Minister and QQI Board, as appropriate, based on the cost recovery model. The fees and charges schedule was updated accordingly on the QQI website in Quarter 4, 2024.

We will improve our services to providers through better self-service technology and enhanced transparency of our fees and charges

Refine, enhance and develop ICT technologies to support the implementation of the new statutory functions, complete ALP development for the TrustEd Ireland (formerly IEM) application opening and continue ongoing Due Diligence requirements

The QQI ICT agile development approach allowed for several phased releases in 2024, enabling the TrustEd Ireland application opening. This included the completion, rollout, and support of the confirmation application form in Quarter 3. Continuous development of our TrustEd Ireland process, including Due Diligence, allowed for the full application opening go-live in October. Hypercare support continued throughout the remainder of 2024. Due Diligence standard development also continued in the second half of 2024 and carried over into 2025.

Release new version of QHub with enhanced efficiency for users

Work continued on QHub development throughout 2024. Many of the required enhancements have now been affected, but additional development work will be ongoing during 2025.

We will enhance our service to learners by transforming our certification systems to digital form

Throughout 2024, QQI continued its work to understand the best options available to meet our needs and those of the learners we serve.

We engaged with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) regarding their digital wallet and the opportunities it offers for QQI to transform our certification to digital form. This digitisation initiative is integrated into our next strategy and continues into the 2025 corporate plan.

We will demonstrate best practice in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and adherence to relevant legislative and regulatory obligations

Design and implement the QQI information and business classification system and complete the enhancement of QQI's Business Process Management System

In 2024, a wider Information and Quality Governance (IQG) programme of projects evolved as the development of the QQI information and business classification system, and the business processes enhancement activities progressed. During the year, design and testing of a new QQI digital assets repository for key policies and processes commenced. The development of this repository includes the design of the new organisational business classification system.

In June 2024, QQI held its inaugural Digital Clean-up Month where staff were asked to review files, emails and applications with the aims of:

- improving organisational information/ data management and structures to

reduce information overload and enhance knowledge management

- mitigating QQI's carbon footprint by identifying obsolete files and duplicate records for disposal
- improving data compliance.

Three all-staff learning hub webinars were organised as part of the initiative, with experts on digital waste and data compliance invited to speak:

1. Introduction to Digital Clean-up Month
2. Digital Waste, the Environment and Clean-up Benefits (international expert)
3. Statutory Obligations regarding Information Management.

The initiative was actively embraced by QQI staff with tangible positive impacts on information and data management across the organisation.

Design and implement Open Data policy and process

Co-ordinate the preparation of a self-assessment report and associated ancillary documentation to support an application for ISSCoP certification for QQI awards-related data

In preparation for QQI's application for Irish Statistical System Code of Practice (ISSCoP) certification, an Open Data policy relating to QQI awards data has been agreed. The policy outlines the methodology for the production of the data, a dissemination policy, quality statement, and confidentiality statement.

The development of the 'Achievement by Learners Database' (ALDa), an MS SQL Server database providing information on each award made by QQI was completed in 2024. The data are sourced from QQI's QHub

and QBS systems to facilitate the analysis and presentation (using Tableau) of QQI programmes and awards data.

Roll out the tailored Management Assurances Framework

The Management Assurance Statement process was reviewed and strengthened with the introduction of tailored checklists per business function that underpins the high-level management assurance statement in each Directorate. This organisational process improvement initiative was guided and governed by senior management and approved in November 2024 for implementation as part of the management assurance process, which are due to be presented to QQI's Audit and Risk Committee in Quarter 1, 2025.

Develop and approve the new QQI Strategy Statement 2025-2027

During 2024, QQI developed its Statement of Strategy for 2025–2027, which was launched in November 2024. Unveiling its new strategy, QQI noted the following:

"The strategy outlines a comprehensive plan to enhance Ireland's tertiary education system. It emphasises the protection of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), the provision of authoritative information on qualifications, and the delivery of trusted regulation and guidance.

A central priority is the futureproofing of the NFQ, ensuring it remains a dynamic and authoritative source for quality-assured tertiary qualifications. QQI plans to award the TrustEd Ireland quality mark to higher education and English language education providers, guaranteeing international learners a high-quality educational experience.

The strategy also focuses on delivering trusted regulation, guidance, advice and services tailored to Ireland's diverse learner and provider landscape. QQI commits to sharing insights, research, and analysis through publications, its website, and both virtual and in-person events.

Recognising the importance of global collaboration, QQI aims to strengthen strategic relationships with European and international partners. This includes leading networks to address academic integrity threats and influencing best practices in quality assurance and qualifications.

Internally, QQI is dedicated to being a resilient, inclusive, and agile organisation, delivering responsive, transparent and effective services to all stakeholders. This strategy aligns with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's goal to enable individuals to realise their potential and to build a prosperous, sustainable, and vibrant society."

The strategy was launched at QQI's annual conference by Keith Moynes, Assistant Secretary, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science where he said,

'QQI envisages a flexible, responsive, and high-quality tertiary education system where learners have confidence that their learning experience is of a high quality and that their learning and qualifications are valued nationally and internationally. This speaks directly to the government and departmental aims to create a more unified tertiary education system which includes further and higher education and English language education. QQI's vision is one that we in the Department fully share.... This vision is

grounded in priorities and actions that speak to the challenges and opportunities of these times.’

Review and revise as appropriate the internal audit function to support the delivery of the approved internal audit cycle and rolling internal audit plan

Internal Audit Function

Internal Audit Plan 2025 - 2027

QQI has a three-year rolling internal audit plan 2025 - 2027, that is reviewed annually. Internal audits are carried out on all the key corporate and business functions of QQI on a cyclical basis.

External Audit Function

The revised *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*, September 2016 recommends that the Authority (the QQI Board) and the Audit Committee should have a discussion with the external auditors at least once a year, without executive members of the Authority or employees of the State body present, to ensure that there are no unresolved issues of concern. As the QQI Annual Financial Statements were signed off and approved in December 2024, the annual meeting of the External Auditor with the Audit and Risk Committee was deferred to Quarter 1, 2025.

Support the refresh and update of the Statutory Appeals and process

QQI worked closely with DFHERIS on the statutory appeals process, with a specific focus on the selection of new panel members. It is expected that new panel members will be appointed in 2025.

Compliance with Code of Practice

QQI complies with the Code of Practice

for the Governance of State Bodies (2016). QQI completed and submitted its annual compliance return to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science during 2024.

QQI adheres to the Public Spending Code by:

- having a purchasing and procurement policy that clearly sets out the requirements and authority levels of purchasers
- ensuring all non-routine items of expenditure support the delivery of QQI’s strategic and corporate plan
- ensuring value for money for all expenditure
- undertaking audits of procurement and purchasing to ensure adherence with best practice
- encouraging staff to be aware of the cost of services to avoid unnecessary expenditure.

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

QQI reports on outcomes to its line department, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science through a Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA), a requirement under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. The PDA, which is developed and agreed annually, is linked to objectives contained in QQI’s corporate plan, which is derived from the QQI Statement of Strategy 2022-2024. An associated three-year oversight agreement (covering the period 2024-2026) was also developed and agreed in 2024. QQI meets several times a year with department officials to review progress under the agreements.

Governance Structure

QQI Board

QQI is governed by a board of ten members including the Chief Executive. Non-executive members are appointed by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The QQI Board is responsible for the approval of financial accounts, policy, strategy statements, corporate plans and annual reports.

The board makes decisions in relation to a number of functions including but not limited to:

- Preparation and adoption of the strategy statement
- Strategic direction and planning, corporate planning and approval of annual reports
- Approval of financial accounts
- Approval of all policy and approaches to policy
- Withdrawal of approval of quality assurance procedures
- Withdrawal of programme validation
- Delegation of authority to a provider to make awards
- Withdrawal or variation of delegated authority to make awards.

It also has functions in relation to programme validation, joint awards, and access, transfer and progression. A number of sub-board committees assist with academic and other key areas of governance and include QQI Board members among their membership.

Membership:

- Professor Irene Sheridan (Chair)
- Dr Padraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Ms Marianne Doyle
- Dr Sean Duignan (Ordinary member with international experience related to QQI’s functions)
- Dr Sharon Feeney
- Mr Blake Hodkinson
- Mr Kevin McStravock
- Ms Anne Naughton
- Mr Bryan O’Mahony (USI nomination)
- Ms Maria Ward (Ordinary member representative of learners)

Table 3: Record of Attendance by Board Members at 2024 QQI Board Meetings

	20 February 2024	22 April	14 June	16 August - Incorporeal	27 September	2 December	Max	Attended
Irene Sheridan	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓	✓	6	6
Padraig Walsh	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓	✓	6	6
Marianne Doyle	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	6	4
Sean Duignan	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓	✓	6	6
Sharon Feeney	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓	✓	6	6
Blake Hodgkinson	✓	✓	-	✓**	✓	✓	6	5
Kevin McStravock	✓	✓	✓	✓**	-	-	6	4
Anne Naughton	✓	✓	✓	✓**	✓	✓	6	6
Bryan O'Mahony*	✓	✓	-	✓**	✓	-	6	4
Maria Ward	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	6	4

In addition to the six board meetings outlined above, a board workshop on the development of the QQI Statement of Strategy 2025-2027 was held on 16 January.

* USI Representative, term of office runs from 1 July to 30 June each year.
** attended via video conferencing.

Gender Balance in QQI Board Membership

As of 31 December, the board had five (50%) female and five male members (50%). Therefore, QQI met the government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards. However, it should be noted that the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) nominee usually serves a membership term of one to two years and therefore, changes more frequently than the other members of the QQI Board.

To address and improve gender balance on the QQI Board, the gender balance on the board will continue to be monitored.

Performance Evaluation

As the current board only commenced its term in April 2023, the external review of the effectiveness of the QQI Board and its committees planned for 2023 was deferred until Quarter 4, 2024 to allow the new board time to establish itself. The report is expected in 2025.

Sub-board Governance

A number of sub-board committees provide specific expertise to academic and other key areas of QQI operations:

Audit and Risk Committee

The purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee is to provide an independent assessment structure and support the QQI Board in their responsibilities for issues of risk, control and aspects of governance, by reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances in meeting the board's and accounting officer's assurance needs and reviewing the reliability and integrity of these assurances. The Audit and Risk Committee met four times in 2024.

Membership and Attendance

Due to the size of the QQI Board, membership of the Audit and Risk Committee is comprised of two board members (one of whom is the chairperson of the committee) and three external non-board members (as opposed to three board members as required by the Code of Practice).

Blake Hodgkinson (chair)	3/4
Kate Cullen (non-board member)	3/4
Pearl Cunningham (non-board member)	3/4
Marianne Doyle (board member)	4/4
Walter Johnston (non-board member)	3/4

The Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee were updated in January 2024 and approved by the board in February 2024. The responsibilities of the Audit and Risk Committee are:

- Financial Reporting
- Internal Control
- Risk Management
- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- Other Reporting.

Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The PAEC makes decisions regarding the validation of programmes leading to QQI awards. The decisions and recommendations of the committee are informed by external expertise and recommendations, normally provided in the form of external panel reports and the outcomes of monitoring and review activities carried out by QQI.

The PAEC met six times in 2024.

Membership and Attendance

Padraig Walsh (chair)	6/6
Órla Barry	5/6
Andrea Durnin	6/6
Mary Grennan	4/6
Barbara Kelly	5/6
Marie Mattimoe	4/4
Jim Murray	6/6
John O'Connor	2/2

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The PSC considers QQI draft policy and makes recommendations to the QQI Board regarding the approval of these policies in line with the organisation’s strategy. It also considers and may act on recommendations from the executive to determine standards of knowledge, skill and competence for education and training awards or to endorse subject guidelines concerning knowledge, skill and competence which are expected for higher education awards. The PSC met twice in 2024.

Membership and Attendance

Kevin McStravock (chair)	2/2
Caty Duykaerts	1/1
Eithne Guilfoyle	1/1
Achim Hopbach	1/1
Bryan Maguire	2/2
Hannah McGee	1/1
Jim Murray	1/2
Anne Naughton	2/2
Damien Owens	2/2
Cassy Taylor	2/2

Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The PAOC reviews and analyses the activities of the PAEC, providing advice and making recommendations on its decisions. It will also confirm or refer back decisions of the PAEC, as appropriate. The PAOC met twice in 2024.

Membership and Attendance

Sharon Feeney (chair)	2/2
Billy Bennett	1/2
Cróna Gallagher	0/2
Mark Kane	1/2
Paula Hodson	2/2
Karen Jones	2/2
Mary Kerr	2/2
Brendan O'Dea	2/2
Maria Ward	0/2

Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC)

The ARC makes decisions and recommendations about the approval of quality assurance procedures; the TrustEd Ireland Mark (formerly IEM); delegated authority; and approves for publication the findings of quality reviews conducted by QQI. The ARC met three times in 2024.

Membership and Attendance

Sean Duignan (chair)	3/3
Fiona Farr	1/3
Laura Flynn	3/3
Carol Hanney	3/3
Anna Murphy	3/3
Ronan O'Loughlin	3/3
Bryan O'Mahony	0/3
Gerry O'Sullivan	2/3
Tony Pettit	1/3

Human Resources and Organisation Committee

The Human Resources and Organisation Committee assists and advises the QQI Board to reinforce its own governance and oversight in the areas of HR and the CEO performance. The Human Resources and Organisation Committee met once during 2024.

Membership and attendance

Irene Sheridan (Chair)	1/1
Sharon Feeney	1/1
Blake Hodkinson	1/1

Corporate Matters

Finance

In 2024, QQI received €16,494*million from State Grant, fee income, EU funding and other sources. For the same period, expenditure was €15,310* million. Pay and pensions expenditure in 2024 amounted to €8,445*million (including FRS17 adjustments)*.

Board Member Payments

Members of the QQI Board act entirely in a voluntary capacity and therefore no fees were paid to members of the board in 2024. Expenses are paid for accommodation, travel, and subsistence in line with rates set by the Department of Finance.

Total board expenses in 2024 were €15,923*.

Remuneration and Expenses of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive received salary payments of €184,323* in 2024. No performance-related pay was received during this period. The Chief Executive’s pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlement in the model public sector defined benefit superannuation scheme. The Chief Executive incurred vouched expenses of €8,450* in 2024.

* These figures are extracted from the draft QQI Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

QQI’s audited financial statements are published on the [QQI website](#).

Risk Management

Risk Management

QQI continued to manage risk in line with the Risk Management Policy, revised in June 2022. The corporate risk register is revised and reviewed on a quarterly basis by EMT. It is considered and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee at each of its meetings and by the QQI Board at least once per year. In 2024, particular attention was given to risks concerning insufficient financial resources, the loss of corporate memory, cybersecurity concerns, and consistency in the approach to records management.

Principal Risks

In line with the revised *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*, September 2016, QQI is required to confirm ‘in the annual report that the Authority has carried out an assessment of the State body’s principal risks, including a description of these risks, where appropriate, and associated mitigation measures or strategies’. The Authority assessed the principal risks to QQI in 2024, and their mitigations, at its meeting 10 February 2025. These are set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4. QQI’s principal risks and mitigations, 2024

Rank	Risk description and mitigations
1	Risk of insufficient financial resources to deliver on objectives in the Statement of Strategy due to unpredictable levels of income from services and potential reduction in core grant. Mitigated by budgetary controls, monthly reports and review of management accounts, proposed revised funding model and reserves retention policy for consideration by DFHERIS and continued engagement with DFHERIS on fees for existing and future QQI services arising from the commencement of new statutory functions in 2024.
2	Risk of loss of corporate memory due to high levels of staff retirement within the next two years (2023/24). Mitigated by a more balanced management structure, roll-out of management development and leaders of the future programmes, the use of capabilities frameworks for recruitment with the aim of achieving a balance of grades and skillsets based on business needs and organisational priorities.
3	Risk that QQI business systems, processes and data are compromised due to a cybersecurity event or data breach. Mitigated by controls to ensure secure access to QQI resources and systems, external independent security centre, regular incident review and vulnerability scanning, robust regular backups, implementation of an action plan for cyber security resilience, implementation and review of disaster recovery plan, and work on disaster recovery, continuous review and updating of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy and Record of Processing Activities (RoPA).
4	Risk that an effective record management system is inconsistently implemented organisation wide due to a lack of simplified structure and appropriate management support. Mitigated by implementation of a programme of work overseen by the Programme Management Office comprising a records management policy, an IT file architecture project, a business processes enhancement project, development of a new classification system, an upgrade of QQI’s intranet, IT file architecture and SharePoint and an Open Data policy and process focus.

Data Protection

QQI is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. The act provides for the collection and use of data in a responsible way and provide against unwanted or harmful uses of the data. QQI maintains oversight of its level of compliance to ensure that we have adequate arrangements and infrastructure in place to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Protected Disclosures

Section 21 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires that every public body establish and maintain procedures for the making of protected disclosures by workers who are, or were, employed by the public body and for dealing with such disclosures.

Statement of compliance with the act

QQI confirms that:

- it has established internal reporting channels and procedures in accordance with the act
- as a prescribed person, it has established external reporting channels and procedures in accordance with the Act
- it has provided, to the minister, information required under the act in accordance with Section 22 (1) for 2024.

Reports of Protected Disclosures 2024:

1. No reports of protected disclosures were made to QQI by QQI employees.
2. Three reports of protected disclosures made to the Chief Executive of QQI as a prescribed person. The first of these was closed as it had insufficient information to meet the criteria for treatment as a

protected disclosure. The second one is under assessment. A third report was received in July, was assessed and is under investigation. It is also noted that a report received in December 2023 was deemed to be a protected disclosure and was investigated in 2024. That investigation concluded in December 2024.

Complaints of Service in 2024

QQI received no complaints of service in 2024.

Internal controls

QQI operates a system of internal control which is a process, affected by the QQI Board, the Executive Management Team, and other personnel, designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives in the following categories:

- Risks to fulfilling QQI's statutory obligations and achievement of objectives as outlined in the statement of strategy.
- Reliability of financial reporting.
- Compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- All financial transactions meet regularity and propriety standards as defined by the C&AG.

The Control Environment

The control environment operated by QQI incorporates:

- internal financial controls policies, processes and procedures
- human resources management
- the risk management framework
- the risk register process



- ICT security and controls processes
- processes and procedures for the making and certification of awards
- the overall management and direction of the organisation by the CEO and directors.

The Audit and Risk Committee continued to operate its oversight role within QQI in accordance with the terms of reference of the committee.

Internal Controls

There were no material breaches of internal controls in 2024.

Fraud

No instances of fraud or suspected fraud were disclosed or discovered during 2024. Neither were any instances of fraud reported to HR, the CEO, the internal auditor or the Audit and Risk Committee during the year.

Conclusion

The system of governance, risk management and internal control in QQI is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve aims and objectives. The senior management within QQI is responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework. The Audit and Risk Committee’s monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors. The committee engaged Mazars to conduct an annual external independent review of the effectiveness of the system of internal controls for 2024 as required by the Code of Practice. The report is scheduled for presentation to the Audit and Risk Committee for consideration and approval at their January 2025 meeting for recommendation to the QQI Board for consideration at its February 2025 meeting.

Energy efficiency and environmental policy statements

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 gives legal underpinning to climate action by the public sector. It requires all public bodies to perform their functions in a manner consistent with national climate ambitions. QQI has adopted the Public Sector Climate Action Plan 2021 and put in place a Climate Action Roadmap in which is set out QQI’s targets to:

- Reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 51% in 2030.
- Increase the improvement in energy efficiency to 50% by 2030.

Progress to date:

1. Became a paperless office.
2. Reduced office space by relinquishing leases.
3. Minimised energy usage by managing the use of our office spaces (in the blended working environment) so that unoccupied spaces are not lit up or heated.
4. Replaced all lighting with energy efficient light emitting diode (LED) systems, the estimated power saving per unit is 66%.
5. QQI supports the bike to work scheme and provides facilities for cyclists including shower facilities and secure areas to lock bicycles.
6. QQI achieved a Bronze Smarter Travel Award in 2024 from the National Transport Authority in recognition of our commitment to sustainable travel.
7. QQI support the TaxSaver scheme to incentivise our staff to use public transport.

As part of plans to reduce its reliance on fossil fuel heating, QQI signed Heads of Terms in relation to a lease extension that commits our landlord to a significant capital investment aimed at retrofitting our leased offices to a very high energy rated standard. Work commenced on this project in 2024, and it is anticipated that the works (including grant applications) will take 18 to 24 months to complete.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, public bodies must uphold equality and human rights in their work. As a state agency responsible for quality assurance and qualifications in education and training, QQI recognises its duty to promote equal opportunities, prevent discrimination and protect human rights in all aspects of its operations.

QQI has assessed the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to its functions and purpose. The results of this assessment have helped QQI to identify priority actions for inclusion in our equality, diversity and inclusion plan 2025-27. Our [equality, diversity and inclusion policy](#) and action plan are available on the QQI website and can also be made available to anyone who cannot access them online.

QQI has achieved Bronze Investors in Diversity accreditation from the Irish Centre for Diversity. This recognises the efforts QQI is making to embed diversity and inclusion across our organisation.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

QA Process	Number of applications with PAEC decisions in 2024
Initial access to validation	5
Total	5
Extension of scope	3
Total	3
FET validation decisions	
New validations (incl. differential)	357
Revalidations	20
Extensions of validation	13
Refusals	15
Total	405
HE validation decisions	
New validations (incl. differential)	47
Revalidations	76
Extensions of validation	72
Refusals	4
Total	199
Grand total	604

APPENDIX 2

Apprenticeships

New validations	2
Extensions	3
Revalidation	21 (of which 16 were submitted by SOLAS)

Glossary of Acronyms

AC	Advanced Certificate	CPD	Continuing Professional Development
AI	Artificial Intelligence		
AIC	Academic Information Centre	CRADLE	Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning
ALDa	Achievement by Learners Database	CRM	Customer Relationship Management Platform
ALP	Amended Legislation Programme		
API	Application Programming Interface	CS	Comparability Statement
AQR	Annual Quality Reporting	CSO	Central Statistics Office
ARC	Approvals and Reviews Committee	CVS	Community / Voluntary Sector
ATU	Atlantic Technological University	DA	Delegated Authority
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression	DABs	Designated Awarding Bodies
C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General	DAWN	Disability Advisors Working Network
CAO	Central Applications Office	DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education Research, Innovation and Science
CAS	Common Awards System		
CCT	College of Computing Technology	DBS	Dublin Business School
CDETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board	DCU	Dublin City University
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training	EAR	European Area of Recognition
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	EEA	European Education Area
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	EHEA	European Higher Education Areas
CHE	Council on Higher Education	ELE	English Language Education
CIMEA	Information Centre of Academic Mobility and Equivalences	EMT	Executive Management Team
		ENAI	European Network for Academic Integrity

ENIC	European Network of Information Centres	GCD	Griffith College Dublin
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register	GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
EQF	European Qualifications Framework	GHG	Green House Gas
EQF AG	European Qualifications Framework-Advisory Group	GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
EQF NCP	European Qualifications Framework-National Coordination Point	HC	Higher Certificate
EQPR	European Qualifications Passport for Refugees	HCI	Human Capital Initiative
ERF	Employment and Recruitment Federation	HE	Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines	HEA	Higher Education Authority
ESU	European Students Union	HEI	Higher Education Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board	HET	Higher Education and Training
ETBI	Education and Training Board Ireland	HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
ETINED	Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education	HR	Human Resources
FE	Further Education	HSE	Health Service Executive
FET	Further Education and Training	ICAI	International Centre for Academic Integrity
GAIN	Global Academic Integrity Network	ICT	Information and Communications Technology
GamAI	Governance Assurance Matrix for Academic Integrity	IEM	International Education Mark
		IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
		ILO	International Labour Organisation
		impEA	Implementation of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
		IP	Institutional Profile

IQG	Information and Quality Governance	NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation
IQQF	Irish Quality and Qualifications Ireland	NStEP	National Student Engagement Programme
IRQ	Irish Register of Qualifications	NTO	National Tertiary Office
ISSCoP	Irish Statistical System Code of Practice	NUI	National University of Ireland
IT	Information Technology	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
IUA	Irish Universities Association	OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
LABs	Listed Awarding Bodies	PAEC	Programmes and Awards Executive Committee
LCETB	Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board	PAOC	Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee
LED	Light Emitting Diode	PDA	Performance Delivery Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	PDAS	Programme Derived Award Standards
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency	PEL	Protection of Enrolled Learners
MTU	Munster Technological University	PSC	Policies and Standards Committee
NAIN	National Academic Integrity Network	PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre	QA	Quality Assurance
NAO	National Apprenticeship Office	QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
NCI	National College of Ireland	QDM	Quality Dialogue Meeting
NEC	National Europass Centre	QDR	Qualification Dataset Register
NFDE	National Framework for Doctoral Education	QILO	Quality Information and Learning Opportunities
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications	QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland		

REAL	Real Exploration of Assessment and Learning	USI	Union of Students in Ireland
RoPA	Records of Processing Activities	VPL	Validation of Prior Learning
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning	WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
SAR	Self-Assessment Report		
SATLE	Strategic Alignment for Teaching and Learning Enhancement		
SER	Self-Evaluation Report		
SETU	South East Technological University		
SOC	Security Operations Centre		
SIEM	Security Information and Event Management		
SME	Small Medium Enterprise		
SQAR	Student Quality Assurance Reviewers		
TAICEP	Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals		
TEMRU	Tertiary Education Monitoring and Review Unit		
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Australia)		
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association		
TLA	Teaching, Learning & Assessment		
TUS	Technological University of the Shannon		
UL	University of Limerick		
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation		



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