



43rd Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee
Monday, 23 June 2025 – 10.00 AM to 2:00 PM
Ballyfermot Training Centre, Dublin

Meeting notes

Present: Kevin McStravock – Committee Chair
Bryan Maguire – QQI Executive Member
Anne Naughton – National Expert (online)
Sandra Campbell – National Expert
Eithne Guilfoyle – National Expert
Cassy Taylor – International Expert
Caty Duykaerts – International Expert

Apologies: Jim Murray – QQI Executive Member

In attendance: Peter Cullen – Head of Research and Innovation (QQI Key Executive for the PSC) and item 9.2.1
Beata Sokolowska (online) – item 5.1
Órla Barry (online) – item – item 9.3.1
Roisín Morris – Drennan (online) – items 3.1 and 9.3.2
Dobrawa Brach - QQI Secretary and item 8.1

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

1. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the 42nd meeting, 24 February 2025, were approved by the Committee, with a minor correction.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of previous meetings

3.1 Verbal update on the work on the Awards Directorate policies

The Executive provided an update on the four policies that QQI had consulted on last year. The outcomes of that consultation were presented to the PSC in February 2025 with the intention of seeking approval for the final versions. However, this coincided with a period of transition within the Awards Directorate regarding policy ownership. The Heads who had conducted the consultation were no longer in those roles. The newly appointed Heads identified several gaps and inconsistencies across the policy suite. Additionally, a number of policy developments - either already commenced (for example due diligence and the IEM) or

underway (such as the new award at Level 6, the introduction of ECTS credits at Level 5, and the draft QA guidelines on work-integrated learning) were not yet reflected in the current versions. Given these factors, the Executive decided to not to progress final versions of the policies without first undertaking a comprehensive review. It was expected that many of the required changes would be technical or potentially consequential to previously consulted policies. A comprehensive review was planned for the summer, with a view to returning to the PSC in September with proposed next steps.

The Committee welcomed the update, and Chair thanked the Executive for presenting.

4. Introductions

4.1 New Committee member: Sandra Campbell

Chair welcomed the newly appointed Committee member, Ms. Sandra Campbell, Director of Education at the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland and invited her to introduce herself to the group. Following this all attendees briefly introduced themselves.

5. Standards – review and development

5.1 *Draft CAS Component Specification for Social Policy at NFQ Level 5* (15 credit)

The Executive outlined the motivation for the proposed new component award standard and process for the development of the *Draft CAS Component Specification for Social Policy at NFQ Level 5*. The Executive highlighted that, with the Committee's approval, the component would be ready to be implemented in September 2025.

A Committee member asked for clarification on how the feedback was incorporated into the development of this component. The Executive explained that all feedback was considered, and it shaped the final wording presented to the Committee.

The Committee adopted the CAS Component Specification for Social Policy at NFQ Level 5.

The Chair thanked the representative of the Executive who presented.

6. Strategic Approach

6.1 Report from the Board

The Committee Chair provided a short update from the April, May and June board meetings for noting.

7. PSC Reflection

No business.

8. Policy Stocktake and Roadmap

8.1 Policy Stocktake – Roadmap

The PSC Secretary provided an update on recent developments, including the following:

- Regular meetings had been held with Executives responsible for the development and maintenance of QQI policies and standards, aimed at updating the Policy Stocktake document.
- A new repository tool is being developed and tested to centralise organisational policies. This tool was designed to be accessible to all staff and will include metadata for each document, along with automated reminders for key dates such as review deadlines.
- New templates had been introduced to improve clarity and streamline the process for submitting papers to the PSC.
- The QQI Communications Unit had begun processing policies and guidelines for translation into Irish. This work was ongoing.
- The Secretary noted that some administrative errors had been identified in a small number of documents, specifically incorrect codes and numbers. These errors had since been corrected.

The Committee welcomed the updated and noted that the developments were impressive.

The Chair thanked the secretary for the update.

9. Policy Development and Review

9.1 Approval of minor modifications

No business.

9.2 Green Papers

Green paper on Micro-credentials was presented by the Executive.

The Executive presented the *Green paper on micro-credentials*. Members considered the paper to be timely and comprehensive. It effectively captured the complexities and tensions surrounding the topic. Members appreciated the clarity and depth of the paper, noting that it would provide a solid foundation for further engagement.

Members also discussed the need for robust quality assurance mechanisms for short learning programmes and the validation approach in the context of micro-credentials.

A question was raised about whether Irish legislation permits such small volumes of learning. It was confirmed that there are no legislative restrictions on how degrees are designed.

Members asked about the clarity of the paper's purpose and QQI's strategic direction. While the introduction mentioned key questions, such as the possible need for changes to the National Framework of Qualifications or the development of quality assurance guidelines, it was noted that options for change were not explored in depth. It was suggested that a SWOT analysis of policy options could be added. In response, the Executive stated that the paper, and especially the questions aimed to help identify what kind of responses, if any, may be required and that it might be premature to conduct SWOT analyses of policy options prior to getting answers to those questions.

Members sought clarification on the consultation process. The Executive confirmed that the invitation to submit responses would be published on the website and shared via social

media channels. The process would be open to all, although it had not yet been decided whether workshops or bilateral meetings would be needed. One member noted the large number of questions in the document and suggested a cascading method of consultation and feedback gathering. The potential use of AI tools to analyse feedback was also proposed.

A suggestion was made to include a comparative table of different credit systems to enhance clarity.

The Committee approved, subject to final refinements, the issue of the *Green paper on Micro-credentials* based on this draft for publication for consultation.

The Chair thanked the representative of the Executive who presented the green paper.

9.3 White Papers

9.3.1 *Policy on Qualifications at NFQ levels 5 and 6; and Outline of the Structure of the National Framework of Qualifications*

The Executive presented the paper to the members. It was well received, with members commenting that it was a very good and clearly written document. The outlined purposes were praised as particularly helpful and useful in understanding the paper's intent. During the discussion, one member sought clarification on sections 2.2 and 3.3, questioning whether they might contradict each other. Several suggestions were made to improve the clarity and flow of the section 4.3.2.

A question was raised regarding the progression from NFQ Levels 4 and 5 to NFQ Level 6, and specifically if progression from different types of programmes was limited by subject. The Executive acknowledged that the paper could be amended to more clearly delineate between programmes and qualifications, confirming that progression was described in general terms at the qualification level.

Additionally, members inquired whether the award-type descriptors were open to feedback or if they were constrained by other policy. In response, the Executive clarified that the descriptors for Level 6 had been amended during the development of this paper and according to feedback received, while those for Level 5 remained unchanged.

It was acknowledged by one of the Committee members that the recognition of the Level 6 for access is a significant and complex matter. The Executive explained that this aspect falls within the scope of the Access Transfer and Progression policy (ATP), and not this paper, and that it would be further addressed as part of ongoing development of the ATP policy.

The Executive expressed appreciation for the feedback received.

The Committee approved the publication of the white paper on the Policy on Qualifications at NFQ levels 5 and 6; and Outline of the Structure of the National Framework of Qualifications based on this draft for consultation purposes and recommended the draft white paper to the Board (as draft policy) for adoption provided the subsequent consultation process does not result in major changes with respect to the approved draft white paper.

The Chair thanked the representative of the Executive who presented the white paper.

9.3.2 Draft Statutory QA Guidelines on Programmes involving Work-integrated Learning

The Executive presented an overview of the *QA Guidelines on Programmes Involving Work-Integrated Learning*. The document was praised for its comprehensive nature and readability. Members applauded both the presentation and the paper, describing it as a key and timely contribution. It was widely regarded as an excellent paper.

Members expressed appreciation for the introduction of the new term that emphasises the integration of the work environment with learning outcomes. A suggestion was made to expand and contextualise the change in terminology from "work-based learning" to "work-integrated learning" in the introduction, highlighting the importance of this distinction.

The objectives of the guidelines were particularly well received and praised. Members also welcomed the inclusion of the PRSB (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies) perspective and recommended that this perspective be retained.

It was suggested that the document could serve as a foundation for the development of additional toolkits and resources, including case studies. These resources could be made accessible to a wide range of audiences. It was noted that the paper might support the development of programmes such as micro-credentials for mentors, contributing to capacity building. It was proposed that training resources for mentors be included in the supplementary materials. The Executive responded that additional resources, including case studies and implementation supports, would be developed. It was suggested that this information be explicitly included in the paper, as it could facilitate the implementation of the guidelines. The Executive agreed with this suggestion, noting that while proportionality should be considered, including practical examples would be beneficial for implementation.

The Committee approved the publication of the white paper *QA Guidelines on Programmes Involving Work-Integrated Learning* based on this draft white paper for consultation purposes.

The Chair thanked the representative of the Executive who presented the white paper.

9.4 Final Decision on Guidelines

No business.

9.5 Policy Advice

No business.

9.6 Other Policy Business

9.6.1 Protection of enrolled learners (PEL) verbal update

The Executive presented an update on the Protection of enrolled learners (PEL). This included an overview of the new statutory arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners that were established on 1 September 2024 with the enactment of the final sections of the 2012 Act. The Executive explained that prior to 1 September 2024, statutory PEL arrangements applied to further and higher education and training providers of programmes leading to QQI awards. Exempt providers are listed in the legislation: these are publicly

funded providers. The new statutory arrangements established from 1 September 2024 apply to a wider group of providers and programmes, including providers of English language programmes that are authorised to use the TrustEd Ireland mark, and awarding bodies that will apply to have their awards included in the National Framework of Qualifications.

The new PEL scheme is underpinned by Ministerial Regulations that specify annual charges to be paid by obligated providers. The Minister for DFHERIS (Minister) instigated a review of these Regulations and the annual charges at the launch of the scheme. This has meant that the new PEL scheme cannot be implemented until this review is complete. The review is currently ongoing, and QQI understands that it should be completed soon, and will include a recommendation on revised annual PEL charges to the Minister.

In the meantime, existing providers continue to be subject to PEL arrangements existing on 1st September 2024. The legislation provides for existing arrangements to remain in place until 31st August 2027 (a three year period from the passing of the legislation). However, new providers due to commence programme delivery in September are subject to the revised arrangements and at this point it is unclear if the review of the PEL scheme will be complete and agreement reached on revised arrangements prior to this date.

It should be noted that legally a Learner Protection Fund (Fund) was established on 1st September 2024. All learners in providers subject to PEL may avail of the Fund should their programme cease to be offered.

The Committee noted the update, and the Chair thanked the Executive.

10. Procedures relevant to the PSC's functions

10.1 Policy review and development framework update

No business.

11. Notable new publications

[White Paper QQI Monitoring Policy and Framework](#)

[White Paper Procedures for Focused Reviews of Programmes of Education and Training Validated by QQI](#)

[White Paper Procedures for Focused Reviews by QQI of the Implementation and Effectiveness of Provider Quality Assurance and Access, Transfer and Progression Procedures](#)

[QQI Insights Work-integrated Learning Practice in Ireland](#)

[Thematic Analysis of the CINNTE Review Reports of Independent and Private Higher Education Institutions](#)

12. Any other business

12.2 Next meeting

The next in person meeting would take place on 29 September 2025.

This concluded the business of the meeting. The Committee broke for lunch which was followed by a tour of the Ballyfermot Training Centre with the centre manager, John Murphy.