

Group

# Interim Quality Report

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board

Date: February - 2026



## PREFACE

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

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

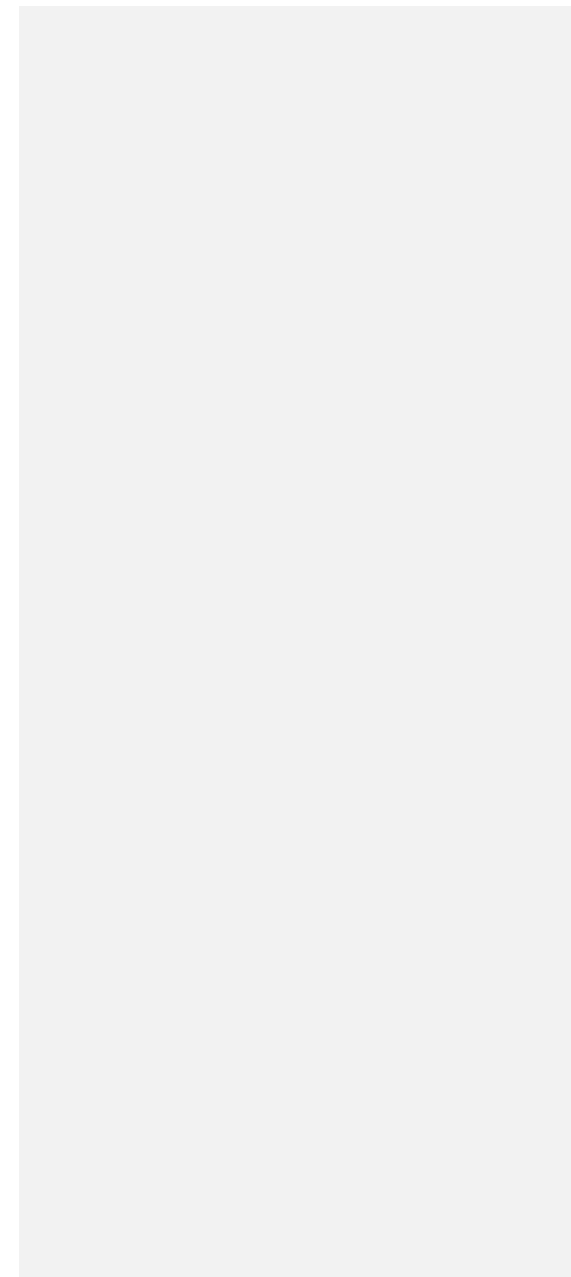
This is the interim quality report for Kilkenny Carlow Education and Training Board

It is to be submitted by 26/02/2026

The interim quality report has been approved by KCETB Quality Assurance Oversight Committee and is submitted by Sarah Barron

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## GUIDELINES ON COMPLETING THE REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

# 1.0 Interim Quality Report

## 1.01 ETB Mission and Strategy

No recommendations were received in this area.

## 1.02 Structures & Terms of Reference for Governance of QA

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025.

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB reviews its approach to specifying and cross-referencing recommendations within the Inaugural Review SER and associated institutional documentation, in order to improve clarity and accountability.	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report
Alongside its own recommendations in relation to governance and management of QA, the review team recommends that it considers:	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report
Opportunities to involve the Board more fully in self-evaluation and the monitoring of quality improvement plans and other FET performance indicators.	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report

<p>Group membership (including the IRSG if it is maintained), to involve other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>The function of the various working groups, to avoid any potential unnecessary and potentially confusing duplication of QA activities.</p> <p>Opportunities to increase external representatives on QA committees (QAOC and PAC) to ensure impartiality.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report.</p>
<p>The structure and roles of the QA Team, to ensure that it has the necessary capacity and capability.</p>	<p>The Director of Further Education and Training supported by the AEO with responsibility for QA continues to review the staffing requirements for the QA Team in line with evolving requirements.</p>
<p><b>Commentary and Reflections</b>  KCETB has continued to strategically review its Quality Assurance structure both in terms of its Governance requirements and the capacity of the QA Team.</p>	
<p><b>Link to published policies and procedures</b>  <a href="#">Governance and Management of Quality Policy – Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board</a></p>	

### 1.03 Documentation of QA

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025.

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

The new Statement of Strategy (2022-2026) is strongly aligned with the outcomes of self-assessment, including the outcomes of the inaugural review. The review team also recommends that KCETB's self-evaluation action planning is cross referenced to its mission and strategy.	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report
The Teaching and Learning policy is concluded and communicated to all stakeholders as soon as possible.	This recommendation is complete with a review of the policy taking place in 2025 and the revised policy published on the QA website.
<b>Commentary and Reflections</b> A new Statement of Strategy will be developed in 2026 for KCETB which will outline the strategic vision, mission and values for KCETB for the next five years. The Teaching and Learning policy was reviewed in 2025, to reflect the evolving landscape and to encompass the modifications required to comprehend KCETB's application for the extension to our scope of provision to include blended learning. The Strategy and policy are providing KCETB with a clear road map for supporting high quality teaching and learning across the organisation.	
<b>Link to Published Policies and Procedures</b> <a href="#">KCETB Strategy Statement</a> <a href="#">Teaching and Learning Policy V2.0</a>	

## 1.04 Staff Recruitment, Management & Development

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025.

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

<p>KCETB conducts a CPD needs analysis across centres.</p> <p>The output of this would feed into the creation of Professional Development Strategy to support KCETB's progress towards achieving its strategic goals.</p> <p>The review team recommends that consideration be given to establishing a formal structure operating through centre managers to ensure that the development needs of each centre as well as the collective needs of KCETB can be taken into and addressed in a CPD strategy.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report.</p>
<p>Related to the CPD strategy, the review team recommends KCETB develop an induction programme for new staff around governance, policies, and processes to ensure a continued consistency in message.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report. A working group has been established for 2025-2026 to review the current induction process and create supporting materials as deemed appropriate. Further detail on this is provided in Section 4 below.</p>

<p>KCETB fills the currently vacant TEL Co-ordinator (or equivalent) position with a suitably qualified and experienced professional with a background in teaching and learning using technology.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report</p>
<p>Formal communities of practice are created to support staff development and sharing of best practice. Community of practice networks could be established for staff teaching in specific areas as well as in subject-specific areas in addition to any existing communities of practice already established.</p>	<p>The PD and TEL officer supported by the QA team has continued to support focussed task groups and collaboration opportunities for programme development and module updates facilitating sharing of best practice, identification of improvement initiatives and discussion opportunities where deemed necessary.</p> <p>National communities of practice are also facilitated through relevant forums to support collaboration in the sector.</p>
<p>The creation of a consistent KCETB wide policy governing the formal staff appraisal process. KCETB may wish to consider introducing an appropriate model of teaching observation to support staff appraisal and development and the realisation of institutional strategic objectives.</p>	<p>KCETB acknowledges that, in line with panel recommendations, consideration needs to be given to the “<i>creation of a consistent KCETB wide policy governing the formal staff appraisal process</i>” and the formalisation of “<i>arrangements in relation to the monitoring of teaching and learning be standardised across all KCETB centres</i>”.</p> <p>However, KCETB works within national frameworks of partnership with representative staff organisations and is limited in some instances by national agreements in how these recommendations could be considered.</p>
<p><b>Commentary and Reflections</b></p> <p>Ensuring access to high quality professional development opportunities is a key priority for KCETB. This is clearly set out in our Statement of Strategy and underpinned in our Professional Development policy. In addition, the establishment of a specific task group tasked with supporting the understanding of QA by teaching staff demonstrates our commitment to high quality teaching and learning and professional development.</p>	
<p><b>Link to Published Policies and Procedures</b></p> <p><a href="#">Professional Development Policy – Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board</a>  <a href="#">KCETB Strategy Statement</a></p>	

## 1.05 Programme Development, Approval & Submission

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025.

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report) Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB continues to build upon its collaborative approach to developing programmes and awards with industry. The review team agrees with the requirement (identified in the SER) to work closely with employers with a view to developing leading programmes for industry. This will require a practice of horizon scanning to see what opportunities exist for collaboration with industry and to ensure programmes align with upcoming employment opportunities within the region. One such opportunity is the potential for development of Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Micro-qualifications/Digital Badging

As part of the review of the governance structure, a key priority identified by the QAOC for 2024-2025 was the establishment of an ETB-wide Employer Engagement Framework. A task group was established to create a framework for that comprehends the range of mechanisms for engaging with employers across KCETB. **Case Study 1** below details the process undertaken and scope of the policy created.

KCETB has continued to engage with key stakeholders locally to identify potential programme development opportunities. In 2025 KCETB piloted the delivery of an unaccredited Thatching programme, subsequently created a certified programme and submitted a validated programme to QQI for approval in late 2025. **Case Study 2** below details the pilot and programme development process.

### Commentary and Reflections

Ensuring the needs of our learners and employers in the region are met is a key strategic priority for KCETB. As detailed above, a clear roadmap for strategic actions in the area of employer engagement has been undertaken and the publication of our employer engagement policy has been instrumental in providing a roadmap for the way forward. Our capacity to develop programmes to meet local needs has also been enhanced as demonstrated by the development of the thatching programme.

### Link to Published Policies and Procedures

[Employer Engagement Policy](#)

## 1.06 Access, Transfer and Progression

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025.

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB review their current implementation of the RPL Policy to ensure it is being applied consistently cross centres and programmes and to develop a formal community of practice around RPL.

It might be helpful to compile and disseminate RPL studies to assist both the learner and teaching staff in understanding and applying RPL within FET.

This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report. KCETB continues to promote RPL where possible and recently presented to an international contingent in conjunction with QQI.

### Commentary and Reflections

KCETB is committed to inclusivity, equality and widening participation in further education and training. We aim to facilitate learner mobility, allowing individuals to pursue educational pathways. To support this, KCETB approved its Access, Transfer, and Progression Policy in 2025, which supports our ongoing commitment to RPL.

### Link to Published Policies and Procedures

[KCETB RPL Policy](#) .

An easy to follow [leaflet](#) is available to support learners, staff and stakeholders.

[Access Transfer and Progression Policy](#)

## 1.07 Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025.

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

<p>The Assessment Policy should be updated to provide clear and practical guidelines around plagiarism detection and actions to be taken so that a consistent approach can be applied across centres.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report.</p>
<p>In addition, the review team recommends that KCETB clarify its position with regard to online invigilation in its Blended Learning, Assessment and Data Protection Policies, having regard to QQI publications on this topic. Should KCETB decide to employ online invigilation, clear guidelines and training needs to be provided, with appropriate checks put in place.</p>	<p>KCETB submitted its application to QQI in July 2025 for the extension of our scope of provision to include Blended and Online learning. Case study 3 below outlines the process undertaken.</p>
<p><b>Commentary and Reflections</b> KCETB continues to be committed to the area of academic integrity with the Academic Integrity Committee continuing to support its development across the ETB.</p> <p>KCETB submitted its application to QQI in July 2025 to extend our scope of provision to comprehend blended learning provision. When approved, blended learning will support our responsiveness and learner access into the future.</p>	
<p><b>Link to Published Policies and Procedures</b> <a href="#">Blended Learning Policy V2.0</a> <a href="#">Academic Integrity Policy</a></p>	

## 1.08 Information and Data Management

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB consider the resourcing of data management across its centres to ensure that an ETB wide data strategy can be implemented, and data related issues can be addressed cross functionally within the ETB.	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report
Conducting an audit of where learner records are stored (both online and in physical locations) and documentation on who has access to this information should be completed as soon as possible. This should be referenced in the Data Protection, Records Retention and Assessment policies and updated at appropriate regular intervals.  Developing Standard Operating Procedures for all of their centres and second providers around data protection, to include an audit schedule and consideration of the most effective way to achieve high-level oversight of data management between IT and OSD.	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report
Prioritising the unification of data through an appropriate IT system and policy to provide for a single source of truth to inform decision making.	This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report

### Commentary and Reflections

The recommendations provided by the review panel afforded KCETB a valuable opportunity to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of our data sources and to strengthen the systems that safeguard their integrity. In response, we have developed and implemented clear, standardised processes and procedures that are now being applied consistently across FET. Alongside these enhancements, we have introduced more rigorous data-management practices and established a structured audit schedule to ensure robust data retention and oversight. These measures collectively reinforce our ability to maintain the security, reliability, and integrity of all KCETB data assets within an evolving and increasingly complex data landscape.

### Link to Published Policies and Procedures

[Programme Data Analytics Policy](#)

[PLSS Learner Management Information System Policy V3.0](#)

[KCETB Data Protection Policies](#)

## 1.09 Public Information and Communication

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the updated report submitted in February 2025

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB should develop a clear and comprehensive corporate branding strategy and policy to showcase their offerings. To support with public information and communication, the review team recommends that KCETB administer constant updates and resources on the public facing website.

This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report.

### Commentary and Reflections

The communication of our strategic message has been a central priority for KCETB in recent years. A significant focus has been placed on strengthening brand awareness and implementing a coherent FET branding strategy. This work now includes the development of dedicated

FET campus branding to support the advancement and visibility of the College of FET in Kilkenny. Collectively, these initiatives will further enhance our communication efforts and ensure a strong, consistent, and recognisable brand presence across all KCETB and FET provision.

**Link to Published Policies and Procedures**

[www.kcetb.ie](http://www.kcetb.ie)

## 2.0 Teaching, Learning & Assessment

### 2.01 The Learning Environment

**All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the update report submitted in February 2025**

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

Formal arrangements in relation to the monitoring of teaching and learning be standardised across all KCETB centres and services to ensure a consistent approach.

This recommendation is complete.

The new Statement of Strategy was formally adopted by the KCETB Board on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. Strategic Goal One: *“Promote high-quality teaching, learning and service delivery standards, embracing new methodologies and innovative approaches”* underpins our commitment to high standards in teaching and learning across the organisation. The development and implementation of the Teaching and Learning Policy have been a key step in the implementation of this strategic goal and coupled with the professional development policy supports high-quality teaching and learning across FET.

KCETB acknowledges the recommendation received but notes that the organisation operates within national frameworks of partnership with representative organisations

	and is limited in some instances by national agreements in how these recommendations could be considered beyond what is outlined above.
<b>Commentary and Reflections</b>	
Ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning is a key priority for KCETB. This is clearly set out in our Statement of Strategy and underpinned in our Professional Development and Teaching and Learning policies.	
<b>Link to Published Policies and Procedures</b>	
<a href="#">KCETB Strategy Statement</a>	
<a href="#">Teaching and Learning policy</a>	
<a href="#">Professional Development Policy</a>	

## 2.02 Assessment of Learners

**All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the update report submitted in February 2025.**

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB review the current arrangements that are in place to support the consistency of workplace competency assessment and thereafter create the formal arrangements necessary for the delivery, monitoring and assessment of work experience and placement.	KCETB's Work Placement Policy (2022) recognises that meaningful learning occurs across diverse contexts and promotes the value of structured workplace environments in enhancing learners' development, skills acquisition and occupational competence. It affirms the organisation's commitment to ensuring that learners are provided with appropriate opportunities to generate valid evidence of their knowledge, skills and competencies through well-designed work-based learning experiences. The policy also establishes a consistent framework for centres to monitor work placement activity and durations in accordance with programme validation requirements, providing a strong foundation for KCETB's enhanced employer engagement approach and policy development in 2025. Case study one below details the development process for the policy and the associated outcomes.
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### Commentary and Reflections

Ensuring learners obtain vocational-relevant work placement that is supported and monitored to a high standard is addressed by the presence of a Work Placement policy. KCETB through the establishment of an employer engagement working group has developed will support us in further enhancing our engagements with employers into the future.

#### Link to Published Policies and Procedures

The [KCETB Work Placement Policy](#) is published on the KCETB QA website. Associated forms are only available internally on the KCETB QA Portal (a SharePoint site)

[Employer Engagement Policy](#)

## 2.03 Supports for Learners

**All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the update report submitted in February 2025.**

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)      Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

KCETB implement a standard Learner Handbook and finalise development of the Learner Support Portal to ensure that learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and relevant assessment procedures for appeals

This recommendation is now complete.

The appointment of a Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator in May 2024 has supported the advancement in our priority of ensuring that all learners are supported in a consistent manner. Through the work of the Learner Support working group a FET wide learner handbook was developed and implemented in 2025, this handbook provides consistent messaging to learners across all provision in areas such as assessment, supports and policies.

### Commentary and Reflections

The appointment of a Learner Support and Wellbeing Co-ordinator has been a significant enabler, and by the close of the 2024/2025 academic year KCETB successfully developed and implemented a comprehensive FET Learner Handbook across all FET centres. The Co-ordinator has been instrumental in leading this work, ensuring the handbook is accessible in both digital and printed formats and fully aligned with learner needs. Moving into the 2025/2026 academic year, the continued enhancement of the FET Learner Support Portal—guided by systematic learner and staff feedback—will further strengthen KCETB’s capacity to provide consistent, high-quality information and support to all learners

Link to Published Policies and Procedures

All relevant learner information and associated website links are available through the [KCETB QA website](#)

## 3.0 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

### 3.01 Self-Evaluation Monitoring & Review

All recommendations relating to this area are complete as per the update report submitted in February 2025

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)    Update - Note progress/changes made to P&P, timeline.

The QA Handbook is prioritised and finalised ahead of the current completion date of September 2023

This recommendation is complete as detailed in 2025

#### **Commentary and Reflections**

The completion and publication of the Quality Assurance Handbook in November 2024 marked a significant milestone in KCETB's QA journey, providing a consolidated framework for consistent and high-quality practice across the FET service. Building on this achievement, KCETB has since updated its Blended Learning Policy and Teaching and Learning Policy and has developed a new Employer Engagement Policy to further strengthen the organisation's strategic and operational foundations.

The focus is now shifting to the systematic monitoring, implementation and ongoing review of our suite of policies to ensure they remain responsive, effective and aligned with evolving learner, employer and sectoral needs.

**Link to Published Policies and Procedures**

[QA Handbook – Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board](#)

### 3.02 Programme Monitoring & Review

**Recommendation** (as recorded in the review report)

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

<p>KCETB develops a systematic approach to reviewing course content to ensure modules and programmes are fit for purpose for both learners and industry and re-examine programme review schedule to link with national priorities.</p>	<p>KCETB published its Programme and Awards Approval and Review Policy in 2022, with a subsequent review completed in 2023. This policy sets out the procedures for the approval, development, and review of programmes within KCETB. The process provides centres and staff with a structured mechanism to request new programmes or modules, review and update existing awards, and submit assessment-related changes. The policy has since been updated to include the application process for blended delivery, ensuring that centres can formally seek approval for programmes delivered through a combination of in-person and online learning.</p> <p>KCETB actively participated in the National Module Update Process (MUP) in 2025. KCETB worked collaboratively with other ETBs on the development and completion of a selection of updated CAS module content. The first phase of the MUP has now been completed and implemented across KCETB.</p> <p>In addition, KCETB has advanced the development of a new thatching qualification, (as detailed in Case Study 2), responding to identified regional and sectoral needs. This work has followed the established programme development and approval processes and reflects KCETB's commitment to supporting heritage skills, local industry requirements, and broader national skills priorities.</p>
<p>Putting mechanisms in place to standardise the approach to learner feedback to ensure areas for improvement development are acted upon in a timely manner. This will support KCETB's work to ensure that learner voice is heard at all levels of provision.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete as detailed in the 2025 interim report.</p>
<p>Making greater use of data and evidence to enhance performance, and support quality within and across the ETB.</p>	<p>This recommendation is complete. (Linked to 1.08 above)</p> <p>A working group has been established to further enhance the usage of data and evidence use to inform programme planning and enhance learner pathways. Further</p>

<p>PLSS data can play a key role in determining programme suitability and future-proofing provision</p>	<p>information on this recommendation can be found in the quality enhancements below (section 4).</p>
<p><b>Commentary and Reflections</b>          KCETB has used the recommendations received from the review panel to significantly grow and enhance the quality of our data sources and our capacity to utilise data to inform programme provision. The establishment of the Data and Evidence Use working group will support us to further enhance this area into the future.</p>	
<p><b>Link to Published Policies and Procedures</b>  <a href="#">Programme and Awards Approval and Review policy</a>  <a href="#">Programme Data Analytics Policy</a>  <a href="#">Learner Management Information System Policy</a></p>	

### 3.03 Oversight, monitoring & review of relationships with external parties

No recommendations received in this area

## 4.0 Quality Developments and Enhancements

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

### Guide:

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

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

No.	QA Objectives <small>These should relate to objectives not already discussed in the progress report.</small>	Update on Status <small>Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress.</small>	Link to updated/new Policy
1	<b>Access, Transfer and Progression</b> KCETB have worked over the last year to enhance its access, transfer and progression processes to support seamless transition opportunities across our system. This has included the integration of VTOS into PLC to provide clear progression opportunities for learners from Level 4 to Level 5 programmes. In addition, the development and delivery of four Tertiary Degrees with SETU, supports learner progression on to Higher Education.	Complete	<a href="#">Access, Transfer and Progression Policy</a> published in Q2 2025
2	<b>Learner Handbook</b> In September 2025 the KCETB FET Learner Handbook was available for all FET learners on full and part-time courses. This was the first time learners had access to a standardised KCETB FET wide learner handbook. The handbook provides our learners with all the relevant information they	Complete	Completed handbook is available on the KCETB internal FET Learner Portal.

	require while studying with KCETB FET and covers key area including access, transfer and progression, induction, assessment, academic integrity, reasonable accommodations, learner supports etc. The handbook was available in print or digital format which could be uploaded to MS Teams or Moodle.		
3	<p><b>Staff Quality Handbook</b></p> <p>A KCETB task group has been convened under the oversight of the KCETB Quality Committee to create a Staff Quality Handbook which will provide guidance and support for staff in key quality areas.</p> <p>The handbook will be a useful resource for all staff to access key information in relation to Quality Assurance. It will be supplemented by a series of videos.</p> <p>The task group is working towards a completion date of August 2026 to be ready for induction of new staff at the start of the 2026 / 2027 academic year.</p>	In progress	In development
4	<p><b>Reasonable Accommodations in FET</b></p> <p>In response to the establishment of the National Reasonable Accommodations in FET Working Group, led by AHEAD and ETBI a KCETB Reasonable Accommodations Working Group was formed in December 2025.</p> <p>The purpose of this group is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake a Self-Review using the 2025 National Maturity Model for FET Disability Support Services.</li> </ol>	In progress	In development

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Engage key stakeholders from across KCETB to inform the review and ensure a collaborative approach.</li> <li>3. Develop a multi-year Improvement Plan (3–5 years) addressing identified gaps, with two initial priorities for 2025–2026: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Updating the KCETB website</li> <li>b. Developing KCETB-specific UDL training</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Ensure ongoing communication and feedback exchange between the KCETB Working Group and the National Working Group.</li> </ol>		
5	<p><b>Data and Evidence Use working group:</b>  The focus of this group established by the QAOC is on creating a structure to use our data for continuous improvement and transparency. The data would provide information for decision making to ensure KCETB is not duplicating programmes in areas of low certification or saturation. In addition, the group will also look at mechanisms to utilise data to support the SMT in identifying strategic priorities in terms of programme delivery.</p>	In progress	In development

## 5.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies (optional)

### Case Study 1 Employer Engagement Policy

#### Introduction

Employer engagement is critical to ensuring that KCETB's Further Education and Training (FET) provision remains aligned with labour-market needs, supports high-quality work-based learning, and maintains consistent quality standards across centres. KCETB's commitment to this area is reflected in the establishment of the Employer Engagement Task Group, mandated by the Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC) to create a standardised Employer Engagement Policy for implementation across the organisation. The Task Group was chaired by a Quality Assurance Officer and comprised of representatives from across KCETB's FET provision, including the Employer Engagement Coordinator, a Senior Training Advisor (Training Services), a Deputy Principal from both the College of FET Kilkenny and Carlow Institute, and the BTEI Coordinator for Carlow representing part-time provision.

The Employer Engagement Policy scope was to include:

1. Collaborating with employers to meet education and training needs, and
2. Facilitating structured work placements for learners across accredited FET programmes.

This case study presents how the Task Group approached the development of this policy, the issues encountered, the actions taken, the resulting outcomes, and key learnings for ongoing QA practice.

#### Description of issues:

Following the establishment of the working group and during initial meetings, several key challenges emerged regarding the consistency and quality of employer engagement across KCETB's FET provision:

**1. Lack of Standardisation Across Centres:** Engagement practices varied significantly between centres and programmes, with staff using different methods for contacting employers, gathering documentation, recording placements, and monitoring learner progress. This inconsistency risked variability in quality and learner experience.

**2. Absence of a Centralised Employer Database:** Although some systems existed (e.g., Mind a Client, Apps Client Services for Apprenticeships), no single CRM was consistently used across centres, leading to duplication, gaps in information, and missed opportunities for cross-centre collaboration.

**3. Fragmented Documentation and Processes:** While the QA Portal hosts formal Work Placement documentation (e.g., WPP01–WPP11), centres differed in how rigorously they applied them.

**4. Increasing Scale of Employer Engagement:** Approximately 3,000 learners were engaged in workplace learning at any point, across work placements, traineeships, and apprenticeships, placing significant pressure on staff to maintain consistent quality standards and documentation.

**5. Need for Clear Governance and Reporting:** The QAOC and Quality Committee required assurance that employer engagement was consistent, documented, monitored, and aligned to internal QA obligations—yet reporting mechanisms varied by centre.

These issues collectively highlighted the need for a clear, organisation-wide Employer Engagement Policy to guide staff practice and ensure quality and compliance.

### Action

Following the identification of the key areas that needed to be addressed, the group was tasked with drafting a policy to be delivered in draft form by May 2025. The following were the key actions agreed to achieve this goal:

**1. Review of Existing Practices and Resources:** the Task Group undertook a review of existing employer engagement mechanisms, documentation, centre resources, and engagement examples. Members uploaded available materials to the dedicated Teams channel to support a comparative analysis.

**2. Agreement on Policy Scope and Structure:** the group aligned the policy with current QA requirements, covering:

- Work Placement engagement.
- Employer-led upskilling programmes.
- Documentation
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Data protection and confidentiality
- Roles and responsibilities
- CRM use across centres

**3. Consultation and External Inputs:** to ensure the policy was informed by national best practice, the group-initiated engagement with other ETBs, and organised presentations on systems such as SEED and Mind a Client, exploring their suitability for KCETB's CRM needs.

**5. Development of a Standard Employer Engagement Process:** drawing on findings from the review and consultation stages, the Task Group developed standardised process flows for:

- Initial employer engagement
- Needs analysis.
- Agreement of responsibilities
- Documentation requirements
- Monitoring and review
- Placement coordination
- Learner and employer feedback

**6. Governance and Reporting:** the Chair updated the QAOC and Quality Committee on progress, risks, and issues arising during policy development and eventual implementation.

#### Key Outcomes/Impacts

The development of the [Employer Engagement Policy](#) has had a significant impact on strengthening KCETB's approach to employer collaboration by providing clear, quality-assured guidance on staff roles, responsibilities, documentation, and engagement protocols. This will improve consistency across centres and programmes ensuring a more coherent experience for both learners and employers. By formalising standard procedures and establishing defined engagement pathways, the policy has reduced variation in practice. Moreover, the policy positions KCETB to more effectively demonstrate compliance with external expectations, including QQI Quality Assurance guidelines for work-integrated learning and stakeholder engagement, thereby strengthening readiness for both internal and external evaluations.

#### Key Learnings

The development of the Employer Engagement Policy generated several important learnings for KCETB, most notably the recognition that significant cross-centre variation in employer engagement practices necessitated a structured, system-wide policy. The process also demonstrated the value of strong governance structures, with clear linkages between the Task Group, the Quality Committee, and QAOC ensuring accountability and alignment with KCETB's broader quality assurance priorities. It became evident that employer engagement is inherently resource-intensive, particularly given the large volume of learners requiring placements and the diverse needs of employers, reinforcing the need for shared tools, templates, and CRM systems to minimise duplication. Extensive consultation, both internally and with other ETBs, proved essential to strengthening the policy, informing best practice, and highlighting the requirement for modernised systems such as Strategic Employer Engagement Database platform referred to as "SEED" or suitable alternatives.

**Commented [AB1]:** This piece seems to be an AI conclusion - the EE group is complete so they no longer report to QAOC / QC

## Case Study 2: Thatching Programme Development

### Introduction

This case study outlines the development of the proposed QQI Level 5 Major Award in Thatching, created by Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) in partnership with the Heritage Council to address a nationally recognised skills gap in traditional built heritage. The initiative forms part of KCETB's Annual Quality Report (AQR) to QQI following the Inaugural Review and demonstrates KCETB's commitment to strengthening quality assurance, responding to sectoral needs, and enhancing provision in traditional craft skills. The programme has been developed and submitted for validation and is currently awaiting the QQI panel visit. This work also aligns with the development of KCETB's College of the Future (COF), including plans for a specialist conservation skills centre.

### Description of issue

KCETB's engagement with the Heritage Council, combined with broader horizon scanning and collaboration with local heritage stakeholders, highlighted a clear gap in accredited training provision for traditional thatching skills in Ireland. With the deactivation of previous QQI Thatching award (5M3693), no recognised certification route was available for learners. National labour market analysis by the Heritage Council identified an ageing workforce, declining generational craft transfer, and a shortage of skilled thatcher's, positioning the absence of an accredited award as a barrier to both workforce development and heritage conservation. These findings aligned with KCETB's inaugural review outcomes, which emphasised the need to expand strategic skills provision and strengthen collaborative, evidence-led programme development.

### Action

In response, KCETB initiated the development of a new programme through its internal governance structures, with the development approved at KCETB's Programme and Awards Committee (PAC) and Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC). An interagency working group comprising of KCETB, the Heritage Council, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and practising thatcher's collaborated to design the programme's MIPLOs/MIMLOs, indicative content, assessments, resources, and programme management structures, ensuring the programme reflected sectoral and conservation requirements.

In parallel, KCETB and the Heritage Council agreed to deliver a 44-week unaccredited pilot programme to generate the practical evidence required to refine and strengthen the development of the proposed award. Fourteen learners enrolled, with eleven completing. The pilot informed improvements in curriculum sequencing, early integration of health and safety training, work-based learning structure, tutor deployment and materials and site management. Following this development and refinement process, the proposed QQI Level 5 Major Award in Thatching,

comprising of eight components covering health and safety, thatching with straw and reed, rethatching techniques, business skills, and work practice, was completed and submitted to QQI for validation. It is currently awaiting the QQI panel visit.

### **Key Outcomes/Impacts**

Although not currently validated, the development process has already yielded several positive outcomes for KCETB. The programme represents Ireland's only proposed nationally accredited pathway in a heritage craft that is at risk of decline. Engagement with external stakeholders strengthened KCETB's collaborative governance model and reinforced the importance of sectoral partnerships. The pilot programme demonstrated demand from learners with learners reporting high satisfaction, successful work placements, and employment opportunities, demonstrating the value of structured thatching training. It also provided practical insights that have strengthened KCETB's operational capacity to deliver practical, skills-based training. The initiative also aligns KCETB with national policy priorities, including Heritage Ireland 2030, and contributes to regional and national skills strategies by supporting conservation, sustainability, and rural development.

Once validated, the programme is expected to expand access to specialist heritage craft training, support the conservation of Ireland's built environment, and create a pipeline of trained thatcher's to address national skills shortages. It will also enhance KCETB's portfolio of provision in niche, high-demand areas. The new qualification would also introduce a scalable and flexible delivery model, offering both full-time and part-time routes, as well as modular progression. This flexibility expands access for a more diverse group of learners, supports skill development across different levels of experience, and strengthens capacity within the heritage conservation workforce.

This programme also forms part of the wider development of KCETB's College of the Future (COF), which includes plans for a dedicated specialist skills centre focused on traditional and conservation crafts. The proposed QQI award in Thatching represents an early example of the type of innovative, sector-responsive provision that will underpin the COF's strategic vision for heritage skills development.

### **Key Learnings**

The pilot course highlighted the practical challenges associated with delivering a craft-based programme without an accredited framework. Learners expressed uncertainty about certification, reinforcing the need for a recognised qualification. The national research conducted on behalf of the Heritage Council further emphasised the urgency of establishing long-term training pipelines for traditional crafts, as the sector faces acute shortages. The development of the award also demonstrated the importance of in-depth collaboration with practising thatcher's, heritage specialists, and government bodies to ensure that the curriculum reflected sectoral needs and respected the integrity of traditional techniques. Operationally, the pilot underscored the importance of realising the ambition of the specialist facilities, appropriate sequencing of learning, and effective tutor scheduling. It also showed that health and safety training must precede or be integrated early into practical modules, as learners found it challenging when these components were delivered too late in the programme.

The proposed QQI Level 5 Major Award in Thatching represents a significant milestone for KCETB while also supporting heritage craft training in Ireland. It addresses the absence of accredited provision, responds to national labour market needs, and supports the renewal of a traditional craft at risk of decline. By creating a structured, flexible, and professionally validated pathway, KCETB and the Heritage Council have laid the groundwork for sustainable skills development and strengthened Ireland's capacity to protect and maintain its thatched built heritage. These learnings will inform KCETB's future programme development processes, ensuring that heritage craft initiatives continue to be grounded in robust QA practice, collaborative design, and evidence-based decision-making.

## Case Study 3: Blended Learning

### Introduction

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) undertook a strategic, system-wide project to extend its approved scope of provision to include blended and online delivery leading to QQI awards. Central to this initiative was the establishment of a Blended Learning Task Group mandated by the Quality Committee to draft and integrate the documentation required by QQI and to embed the necessary quality arrangements across the organisation. The project built on KCETB's mature QA system and translated sectoral guidance into local policy, processes and staff development. A revised Blended Learning Policy (v2.0) set out the organisational, programme and learner-experience contexts; this policy directly informed an Implementation Strategy and the evidence base for the QQI Extension of Scope application. From the outset, KCETB positioned blended learning as an enabler of flexible access and parity of experience, guided by the Principle of Equivalency ensuring comparable quality, supports and outcomes for learners irrespective of mode. This principle is woven through policy statements, infrastructure commitments and learner-support provisions.

### Description of issue

Following the publication of QQI's revised statutory guidelines for Blended and Online delivery, a significant organisational requirement to extend its scope of provision to include blended and online learning was identified. This application was required in order to meet evolving learner needs, national FET strategy priorities, and QQI's statutory quality assurance expectations. While KCETB already possessed a mature QA system, it became clear through internal review and the QQI gap-analysis process that existing policies, governance structures, programme-approval mechanisms and learner-support arrangements required adaptation to ensure that blended learning could be delivered to a consistently high standard across all centres and programme areas. In order to meet the requirements, set down in the QQI guidelines, KCETB needed to

demonstrate that it could guarantee equivalency of learner experience, maintain academic integrity (including in the context of AI), ensure compliance with GDPR and other regulatory frameworks, and provide appropriate supports for learners engaging remotely. To address the gaps identified in the gap analysis, KCETB established the Blended Learning Task Group, charged with developing the necessary strategy, policies, procedures and quality-assurance documentation to support a sector-standard, scalable and quality-assured blended learning model.

### Action

Following approval to proceed with the application for the extension to the scope of provision by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the QAOC, the Blended Learning Task Group was convened under the Quality Committee. The group had defined membership spanning QA, PD&TEL, centre management and practitioner expertise, and chaired by the Adult Education Officer for QA. Its purpose was to draft, co-ordinate and quality-assure a suite of documents needed for the QQI application and to guide operationalisation across KCETB.

The Group's scope covered: a self-evaluation template, an action plan, a self-assessment tool, a Blended Learning Strategy, and a review of the existing policy, each aligned to QQI's 2023 statutory guidelines for blended and fully online programmes. A time-bound workplan (January–June 2025) was agreed for drafting, review and approval through QA governance.

Once established the working group set about completing the Self-Evaluation Report and associated action plan. These two documents supported the group in identifying the key areas where actions needed to be undertaken. Both documents were reviewed by the Quality Committee and approved by QAOC on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, ahead of its submission to QQI in February 2025. Developing the Blended Learning Strategy began in early February with the Self-Assessment Tool also progressed in parallel. A review of the KCETB Blended Learning Policy was also undertaken. In advance of submitting the application to QQI in Q3 2025, the KCETB programme approval processes were reviewed to ensure they were sufficiently robust to incorporate the blended-learning requirements.

### Key Outcomes/Impacts

The development and implementation of KCETB's blended learning framework resulted in several quality-enhancing outcomes. These include:

1. Integrated QA framework for blended learning  
KCETB now operates within a coherent and cross-referenced suite of policies and supporting documents that together provide a robust quality assurance framework for blended learning provision. This framework aligns fully with QQI's guidelines leading principles: Organisational Context, Programme Context, and Learner Experience which formed a critical foundation for the Extension of Scope submission.
2. Strengthened programme approval and assessment integrity  
Programme approval processes have been strengthened to require explicit evidence of online learning outcome achievability, adequate staffing and resources, authentic assessment design, and strong academic integrity arrangements, including guidance on Artificial

Intelligence. Interim protections, such as on-site QQI examinations, were implemented pending the procurement of compliant remote-proctoring solutions should they be required.

3. **Enhanced staff capability and consistent digital practice**  
Staff capability has increased through mandatory induction for blended delivery, ongoing professional development pathways in areas such as synchronous/asynchronous pedagogy, UDL, and assessment literacy, and the introduction of a governed list of approved digital tools supported by Data Protection Impact Assessments. These measures have promoted greater consistency and confidence in programme design and delivery.
4. **Parity of learner experience and improved access**  
Guided by the Principle of Equivalency, learners engaging remotely now have access to supports comparable to those available on-site, including device loans, guidance and wellbeing services, disability supports, and digital libraries. Clear online engagement protocols and netiquette guidance have further strengthened expectations of respectful and inclusive participation.

### **Key Learnings**

The project generated several important insights that will inform KCETB's ongoing development of blended learning provision. A key learning was the importance of establishing clear governance and scope from the outset; a formally constituted Task Group with an agreed remit, defined timelines, and representation from QA, PD&TEL, centres, and practitioners greatly accelerated consensus on definitions and direction. Aligning all developments to QQI's three contexts—Organisational, Programme, and Learner Experience, proved essential in maintaining coherence and avoiding fragmentation. The work also demonstrated that the Principle of Equivalency must be actively operationalised: achieving genuine parity of learner experience requires equitable access to supports such as devices, guidance, wellbeing services, structured induction, clear online engagement standards, and transparent assessment processes with appropriate identity and integrity measures. Another major learning was the need to prioritise staff capability and platform governance. Mandatory induction, targeted professional development in online pedagogy and assessment, and a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) based digital-tool approval process were identified as prerequisites for consistency, scalability, and reduced organisational risk.

### **Conclusion:**

KCETB's approach demonstrates how an ETB can extend its scope to blended learning in a quality-assured manner. By anchoring the work of a cross-functional Task Group within established QA governance, aligning policy and practice to QQI's frameworks, investing in staff capability, and centring learner parity, KCETB has created a sustainable platform for flexible, high-quality provision.

## 6.0 Reporting Feedback Survey

(This section will not be published)

Please complete a short survey in relation to the Reporting **process** using this [link](#).