

# Annual Report 2025



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



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# Introduction from the Chairperson

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), as the state agency for quality assurance and as the national qualifications authority, plays a unique and vital role in safeguarding the integrity of the further and higher education and training system in Ireland.

2025 marked the first year of QQI's Statement of Strategy 2025–2027, Looking after learner interests. The work undertaken during 2025 reflects both continuity in QQI's core statutory functions and a renewed focus on responding to an evolving and increasingly complex education and training landscape. This annual report outlines how QQI has fulfilled its role during 2025, guided by its legislative mandate, its values and its commitment to meeting the needs of learners, society and the economy.

QQI is committed to deepening its national and international partnerships and in 2025, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and QQI published their fourth Memorandum of Understanding. This is the first agreement with

a statutory footing following the publication of the Education Authority Act, 2022.

QQI, in its role as the awarding body for craft apprenticeships programmes, welcomed the opportunity to contribute to discussions on apprenticeship during meetings of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. This engagement directly aligns with our mission to promote public confidence and trust in the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's education and training systems.

In 2025, the board was pleased that QQI achieved reaccreditation of the IBEC KeepWell Mark™ and was listed in the Top 100 Companies Leading in Wellbeing Index (Business & Finance in partnership with IBEC). This is a positive alignment with QQI's strategic priority of creating a resilient and agile organisation. We wish to acknowledge and thank staff across the organisation for their dedication and valuable contributions in 2025 towards achieving our shared vision for Ireland's tertiary education and training sector.

The QQI Board would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Padraig Walsh, CEO of QQI, for his leadership of the organisation. As CEO of QQI from its establishment until March 2025, Dr Walsh oversaw the merger of the antecedent organisations to form QQI and led the organisation through four statements of strategy and the publication of the current strategy. The board also recognises the contribution of Ms Cliona Curley, who served as Interim CEO of QQI following Dr Walsh's retirement.

We warmly welcome our new CEO Dr Lynn Ramsey, who took up her position in November 2025. We look forward to working with her and staff across the organisation as QQI continues to deliver on its regulatory commitments.



**Prof. Irene Sheridan**  
Chairperson, QQI



# Introduction from the CEO

On behalf of the authority with responsibility for quality and qualifications in Ireland, I would like to present the 2025 annual report outlining progress on QQI's strategic priorities in delivering on our mission to maintain and enhance public trust and confidence in learning.

As a designated awarding body, QQI certified 143,925 learners in 2025, issuing 453,026 awards. QQI's validation of programmes in 2025 included 17 micro-qualification programmes for the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), as well as 60 differential validations to facilitate shared curricula across the ETBs. QQI also established its extension of scope process for the extension of programme validation to include blended and fully online modes of delivery.

QQI's 2025 CINNTE cycle of reviews was extended to include independent and private HEIs alongside publicly regulated institutions. Review reports for Atlantic Technological

University, South East Technological University, Dublin Business School, Hibernia College, Griffith College and National College of Ireland have been published on QQI website. QQI published two thematic analyses drawn from CINNTE institutional review reports. In addition, an analysis of key themes in the interim quality reports of the ETBs was also published.

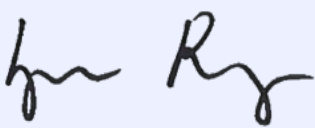
Trusted regulation is a cornerstone of QQI's role and of its current strategy. In 2025, QQI received its first applications for TrustEd Ireland, a new quality mark for international education authorised by QQI to higher education institutions (HEIs) and English language education (ELE) providers.

QQI initiated two focused reviews of providers in 2025. There was a focused review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures at SOLAS for Phases 4 and 6 of the craft electrical apprenticeship programme. The recognition of prior learning and assessment at City Education Group was also the subject of a focused review. The review reports with findings and recommendations were published on the QQI website.

QQI has statutory responsibility to promote, further develop, maintain and implement Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Two significant public consultations regarding the NFQ took place between 2024 and 2025 focusing on intermediate qualifications at NFQ levels 5 and 6 and on QQI's access, transfer and progression policy. Given the importance of the considerations involved in both consultations, discussions will continue into 2026. During 2025, QQI made substantial progress in its strategic project to redevelop the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ), incorporating engagement from end users to inform changes to data collection and user experience.

Stakeholder engagement and consultation are critical aspects of QQI's work. 2025 saw QQI engage with the tertiary education sector extensively across a number of public consultations. QQI would like to acknowledge and thank stakeholders for their time and input into these consultations, which are invaluable in the development and implementation of our policies, guidelines and regulatory processes.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of staff across QQI throughout 2025 and look forward building on this momentum with them in the year ahead.



**Dr Lynn Ramsey**

Chief Executive Officer, QQI



# About QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is an independent state agency, which is responsible for promoting the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education and training system. In discharging its statutory remit, QQI works with a broad range of stakeholders to achieve its strategic objectives.

QQI's regulatory role enables its mission to build public confidence and trust in Ireland's tertiary education system. QQI acts transparently and with integrity to realise its vision of a flexible, responsive and quality assured system.

In addition to its responsibility for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland, QQI validates programmes, makes awards and is responsible for the promotion maintenance development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications.

QQI hosts NARIC Ireland, which provides advice on the academic recognition of foreign qualifications by comparing them, where possible, to a major award type and level on the Irish NFQ.

QQI plays an important role in informing the public about the quality of education and training programmes and qualifications and advises the Minister for Further and Higher Education Research Innovation and Science on national policy regarding quality assurance and enhancement in education and training.



## QQI in Numbers

**453,026** QQI Awards were made

**143,925** learners were certified

**12,000+**

learners presenting further education and training awards had their points calculated by QQI, supporting progression to higher education

**576**

requests relating to replacement certificates were received

**2,700+**

requests for qualification verification from holders of awards made by QQI and its legacy awarding bodies were responded to

**41,564**

qualification comparability statements were downloaded via NARIC Ireland online service

**188**

higher education validation processes were completed

**184**

further education and training validation processes complete

### **QQI Awards**

In 2025, 143,925 learners received QQI awards, a 4% increase on the 2024 figures. These learners attained a total of 453,026 awards<sup>1</sup>. This continues a pattern of sustained growth, representing the third successive annual increase since 2022.

### **Verification of Qualifications**

Demand for qualification verification remained strong throughout 2025. Requests were submitted for a range of purposes, including employment checks, education evaluation services, applications to further or higher education, and residency or professional recognition requirements overseas. During 2025, QQI responded to over 2,700 verification requests from holders of awards made by QQI and its legacy awarding bodies.

### **Certificate Replacement Service**

In 2025, QQI received 576 requests relating to replacement certificates, continuing a pattern of year-on-year growth since the service was established in 2019. This trend reflects the sustained growth in certification activity and the importance of the service to award holders seeking replacement documentation.

### **Access to Higher Education Using QQI Awards**

The Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS) provides an important progression route for holders of QQI awards into higher education. QQI supports the operation of the scheme by supplying scored results data to the Central Applications Office (CAO), enabling participating higher education institutions to make offers to eligible applicants.

In 2025, QQI calculated points and provided data to the CAO for over 12,000 learners presenting further education and training awards, supporting progression pathways to higher education.

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes certification figures for all further education and training (FET) minor awards in the CAS, including those achieved alongside a major award.

**Table 1: QQI Awards certified<sup>2</sup>**

| Sector       | Major                   | Minor                   | Special Purpose        | Supplemental         | Total                   |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| FET          | 33,043<br>(+11%)        | 372,644<br>(+5%)        | 31,430<br>(+6%)        | 200<br>(+71%)        | <b>437,317</b><br>(+6%) |
| HE           | 12,590<br>(+18%)        | 575<br>(-13%)           | 2,544<br>(+3%)         | -                    | <b>15,709</b><br>(+14%) |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>45,633</b><br>(+13%) | <b>373,219</b><br>(+5%) | <b>33,974</b><br>(+6%) | <b>200</b><br>(+71%) | <b>453,026</b><br>(+6%) |

**Table 2: NARIC Ireland statistics**

|         |                                                                                        |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 119,452 | Page views of the NARIC Ireland database                                               |
| 41,564  | Comparability statement downloads                                                      |
| 164     | Countries used the NARIC Ireland customer relationship management (CRM) online service |
| 3,998   | Queries and requests to CRM online form service                                        |
| 2,186   | Queries and requests to NARIC mailbox                                                  |
| 120     | Average number of phone calls per month to NARIC Ireland                               |
| 7,384   | Total number of queries to NARIC Ireland team in 2025                                  |

<sup>2</sup> The data in brackets illustrate the percentage change from the equivalent 2024 figure. Data reflect certification volumes recorded following the February 2026 certification period, which may be subject to minor changes effected in subsequent certification periods.

**Table 3: Quality assurance approval and validation decisions**

| <b>Quality Assurance (QA) approval and validation decisions</b>  | <b>Number of applications determined in 2025</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>QA approval decisions</b>                                     |                                                  |
| Initial access to validation (QA approval)                       | 2                                                |
| Extension of approved scope of provision                         | 10                                               |
| <b>Total number of QA approval processes</b>                     | <b>12</b>                                        |
| <b>Further education and training (FET) validation decisions</b> |                                                  |
| New validations                                                  | 54                                               |
| Differential validations                                         | 107                                              |
| Revalidations                                                    | 4                                                |
| Extensions/ Modifications of validation                          | 19                                               |
| Refusals                                                         | 0                                                |
| <b>Total FET validation processes</b>                            | <b>184</b>                                       |
| <b>Higher Education (HE) validation decisions</b>                |                                                  |
| New validations (including differential)                         | 46                                               |
| Revalidations                                                    | 76                                               |
| Extensions / Modifications of validation                         | 66                                               |
| Refusals                                                         | 0                                                |
| <b>Total HE validation processes</b>                             | <b>188</b>                                       |
| <b>Overall total</b>                                             | <b>384</b>                                       |



# Achievement of Strategic Objectives



## Priority 1:

### Future-proof the National Framework of Qualifications as the authoritative information source for quality-assured tertiary qualifications

#### Further develop QQI's platforms to promote the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as the authoritative source of information on quality-assured qualifications including micro-credentials

##### Irish Register of Qualifications Redevelopment

QQI has a statutory function to establish, maintain and develop a database providing information on awards recognised within the NFQ, programmes of education and training which lead to awards recognised within the Framework and any other programmes QQI thinks appropriate.

The Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ) is the national database of qualifications included in the NFQ and the programmes that lead to them. The maintenance of the database is supported by the Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) uploading updated programme information at least once a year.

The IRQ brings together information about qualifications from across tertiary education and training so that learners, employers and others can easily explore and understand the qualifications landscape. The IRQ is the most reliable source of information about qualifications and quality assured providers in Ireland. It is increasingly important to maintain and publish the IRQ as a definitive and curated

national repository, national repository of tertiary qualifications as the rise of artificial intelligence increases the challenge of ensuring that retrieved information is accurate, complete and current.

In 2024, QQI commenced a multi-year project to redevelop and improve the IRQ supported by funding received from the European Commission to implement the National Europass Centre and the European Qualifications Framework National Coordination Point. The vision for the redeveloped register, which is expected to launch at the end of 2027, is that it will be the authoritative and comprehensive source of information about quality assured qualifications and learning opportunities in Ireland, and can be used to inform other sources of information, eliminating the risk of inconsistency of data and reducing reporting burden. The objectives and proposed benefits of this project include:

- enabling new functions such as TrustEd Ireland, Listed Awarding Bodies and Delegated Authority
- enabling the publication of non-qualification information such as micro-credentials and English language programmes
- improving the quality and quantity of existing information
- improving functionality regarding the uploading of information
- collecting information to support other public policy objectives including a list of programmes offered by TrustEd authorised providers that meet the programme requirements set by the Department of Justice for student immigration; and a list of the programmes that meet the programme and institution requirements set by Revenue Commissioners for tax relief on programme fees

- integration with important European databases such as the Qualifications Dataset Register (QDR) on Europass and the Database of European Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR)
- integration with national databases such as Qualifax which will reduce the burden of maintaining up to date programme information and enable capacity to continue improving user experience
- publishing as open data to ensure information can be used strategically by the sector to support programme development, policy making, skills forecasting and workforce planning
- automated report enabling more accurate tracking and analysis of emerging trends across tertiary education.

Data integration with other data reporting associated with tertiary education and training will be explored as part of the project.

As part of the redevelopment of the Irish Register of Qualifications, in March 2025, QQI began an analysis of the European Learning Model (ELM) with the aim of translating it into a data schema to underpin the IRQ. A schema was finalised and wireframes of the proposed data collection methods for the future IRQ were produced and prepared for external consultation with end users. To support better understanding of European Skills, Competences, and Occupations (ESCO), an element of the ELM, QQI joined the ESCO Member States Working Group in November 2025.

In June 2025, QQI [published data](#) from the IRQ outlining the qualifications included in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and analysed by NFQ Level, award class,

sector, field of learning, credit volume and awarding body. This will serve as a baseline to facilitate the identification of trends and to inform an understanding of how the qualifications included in the NFQ are changing each year.

QQI is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders as part of this IRQ redevelopment project and in response to feedback received from end users about the usability and appearance of the IRQ, interim improvements were made to the existing register in 2025. These include:

- a fully redesigned home page explaining the purpose of the IRQ and its search functions
- an updated FAQ page providing clear, accessible answers to common questions, helping users to better understand the IRQ and when to use it
- a new colour scheme that is more modern and appealing
- enhanced search functionality now providing predictive suggestions
- updated higher education provider profiles to include information on providers who have been TrustEd Ireland authorised
- the introduction of English language education as a sector in preparation for the introduction of TrustEd Ireland authorisation for English language providers.

### **Review and modify the current award types in the NFQ to better serve learners in a more integrated tertiary education system**

#### **Green Paper on Intermediate Qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6**

The consultation on the Green Paper on Intermediate Qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 closed in March 2025, and 50 responses were received. 10 meetings were held with stakeholders between January and March 2025 involving over 150 participants. The green paper was also discussed at a dedicated consultation workshop held as part of the annual EU Reference Group meeting. [A consultation report](#) was published in September 2025, along with a White Paper on Qualifications at NFQ Levels 5 and 6. The consultation was extended to February 2026.

#### **Recognition of listed awarding bodies and inclusion of their awards in the NFQ**

The first application for establishment as a Listed Awarding Body (LAB) was received in January 2025 and the site visit was conducted in April 2025. Additional documentation to enable establishment is expected in early 2026.

Two further applications to confirm the achievement of the minimum requirements were received in late 2025, with the full applications expected to be submitted in 2026.

### **Undertake a review of individual provider adherence to access, transfer and progression policy and the appropriate recognition of prior learning**

#### **QQI's Access, Transfer and Progression Policy**

The consultation on the Green Paper on QQI's Access, Transfer and Progression Policy closed in May 2025 and was supported by five dedicated consultation meetings and engagements with a wide range of stakeholders. In total, 32 responses were received to the consultation.

QQI's consultation on the 'Green Paper on Micro-credentials and the short programmes that lead to them' will also inform the principles in relation to credit accumulation and transfer, sometimes referred to as stacking. As the consultation on this green paper closes in 2026, it is anticipated that the White Paper on Access, Transfer and Progression Policy and the associated consultation report will be published in 2026.

## CASE STUDY:

### Piloting GenAI in QQI's Annual Quality Report Synthesis

QQI piloted the use of GenAI to support the analysis and synthesis of Annual Quality Reports (AQRs). The initiative aligned with national guidance on responsible artificial intelligence use and QQI's strategic objective to incorporate artificial intelligence, where appropriate, into system-level analysis.

#### Description

Two tools were trialled: MAXQDA Tailwind for qualitative coding, theme extraction and cross institutional comparison; and Microsoft Copilot to support drafting and refinement of synthesis text. The pilot examined whether GenAI could enhance efficiency and provide deeper comparative insights while maintaining strong human oversight.

#### Process

AQRs were uploaded to MAXQDA Tailwind for initial artificial intelligence supported thematic analysis. Outputs were then reviewed and validated by QQI staff against the original reports to ensure accuracy and appropriate interpretation. Copilot supported drafting, consistency checks and proofreading. Human expertise remained central throughout.

#### Key Outcomes

The pilot facilitated more efficient identification of sector-wide themes, which included governance and management of QA, effectiveness and impact of QA, academic integrity, programme development, research

activity and monitoring and review. Emerging themes included digital transformation, cybersecurity, micro-credentials, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and growing institutional engagement with GenAI.

#### Key Learnings

GenAI facilitated efficient early thematic extraction and comparison; but requires human validation for accuracy and context. Staff training and capacity building are vital. Early attention to data governance and security is necessary. GenAI is a valuable tool to support expert judgment, not a replacement for human agency.

#### Next Steps

QQI is developing organisation wide principles and policy for the use of GenAI. As this work progresses, GenAI will be integrated more fully into future AQR synthesis cycles, with potential for wider application across internal QA and provider engagement processes.



## Priority 2:

Deliver trusted regulation, guidelines, advice and services appropriate to the requirements of a diverse learner and provider landscape

**Provide authoritative information about the quality of the public tertiary education system through a comprehensive monitoring framework using appropriate quantitative and quality tools**

As part of QQI's insights reports series, a number of system level thematic analysis reports were completed during the year:

### CINNTE Reviews' Synthesis

QQI conducted a thematic analysis of the CINNTE institutional review reports for both the technological universities (TUs) and independent/private higher education sectors. The resulting synthesis reports identify key sectoral themes, outline emerging quality assurance and enhancement priorities, and support system-level dialogue, shared learning, and transparency.

### Technological Universities' CINNTE Reports' Synthesis

The synthesis report for the five technological universities was officially launched in November during an event at Technological University Dublin.

The report highlights themes such as the development of institutional-wide quality

assurance (QA) frameworks, aligning QA processes with strategy, advancing student engagement, digital initiatives and cyber security.

### Independent/Private HEI CINNTE Reports' Synthesis

The synthesis report of the CINNTE review reports for the four largest independent/private higher education institutions was officially launched during an [event in September](#).

The report highlights themes such as programme diversity, transnational education partnerships, institutional governance, and QA characteristic of independent/private providers.

### Annual Quality Reports' Synthesis

During 2025, the periodic thematic analysis of the Annual Quality Reports (AQRs) submitted by higher education institutions was conducted. An innovation in the process this year was the piloting of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools to support a more efficient thematic analysis process. The methodology for the synthesis employed licensed versions of MAXQDA Tailwind, an artificial intelligence driven thematic tool, and Microsoft Copilot. See the related case study below for further details.

Two synthesis reports were published in the QQI Insights series, [Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2025 Independent and Private Institutions](#) and [Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2025 Public Higher Education Institutions](#).

A peer learning event was held in December to highlight findings from the synthesis, and to share good practice case studies submitted by institutions as part of the AQR process.

ETB Interim Quality Reports’ Synthesis

The Thematic Analysis of the Interim Quality Reports 2025 of the ETBs, a separate book of case studies of QA practice in Education and Training Boards (ETBs), was published in December. The analysis provides a system-wide snapshot of QA progress and priorities in the ETB sector. Key themes include ongoing QA policy development, enhanced learner engagement, staff development, increased data use, collaboration, and shared challenges such as resource and data management. The findings help guide QQI’s engagement and evidence-based oversight of ETBs.

Quality Dialogue Meetings

As part of QQI’s biennial quality dialogue meetings (QDMs), on-site meetings with each ETB took place from June to November. These meetings allowed senior management from QQI and the ETBs to exchange strategic updates and discuss shared priorities in further education and training.

Tertiary education monitoring and review

QQI’s higher education monitoring and review activities continued in 2025 as part of its statutory cycle of institutional reviews. Periodic monitoring of provider quality assurance was conducted through annual quality reporting and quality dialogue meetings.

During this period, the institutional review cycle for the technological universities (TUs) and for the four largest independent/private higher education institutions was completed. All review reports were published on the [QQI Reviews Library](#) prior to the preparation of the subsequent synthesis reports.

In 2025, plans were completed to start the next phase of CINTE reviews for smaller private/ independent higher education institutions. The review framework was updated after sectoral consultation, with new terms of reference and a revised handbook set for publication in early 2026.

Establishment of a new overarching QQI monitoring policy and framework

In 2025, QQI published a white paper proposing a new policy and framework for monitoring. A public consultation process was conducted and concluded in September 2025. The feedback received has been analysed and is informing the next stage of development. Further analysis and research to support the development of the monitoring policy and framework will be undertaken in 2026.

| Institution                                             | Review Report Publication |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <a href="#">Munster Technological University</a>        | September 2024            |
| <a href="#">Technological University of the Shannon</a> | November 2024             |
| <a href="#">South East Technological University</a>     | April 2025                |
| <a href="#">Atlantic Technological University</a>       | April 2025                |
| <a href="#">Dublin Business School</a>                  | January 2025              |
| <a href="#">Hibernia College</a>                        | April 2025                |
| <a href="#">Griffith College</a>                        | May 2025                  |
| <a href="#">National College of Ireland</a>             | May 2025                  |

## CASE STUDY:

### Evaluation of a Joint Programme using the European Approach

#### Introduction

An application to QQI to conduct the evaluation of *Pathfinder – Joint International BA in Film* using the European Approach was submitted by Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT). The programme is jointly delivered by IADT (Ireland), Lusófona University (Portugal), LUCA School of Arts (Belgium), and the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA) (Bulgaria).

#### Description

As *Pathfinder – Joint International BA in Film* is a joint effort involving several European partner institutions, the European Approach offered a unified and consistent evaluation framework. The results could help to streamline individual national accreditation processes where feasible. For IADT, the evaluation was also an opportunity to implement the newly established European Approach procedures in practice and to gain experience in cross-border quality assurance. The evaluation concentrated on programme delivery and the contribution made within the consortium, covering design, learning outcomes, assessment, governance, and quality assurance at partner institutions. It assessed how these practices met the European Approach standards.

#### Evaluation Process

A structured evaluation process was undertaken according to QQI's procedures for the European Approach. This included the following phases:

- i. Formal Request and Eligibility Confirmation
- ii. Submission of joint Self-Evaluation Report
- iii. Appointment of an external panel
- iv. Site Visit by the external panel
- v. Preparation of Panel Report
- vi. Consideration and Formal Outcome
- vii. Follow-Up and Publication

#### Key Outcomes / Impacts

The [evaluation report](#), which is published on QQI's reviews library and uploaded to DEQAR, highlighted several strengths of the *Pathfinder – Joint International BA in Film* and also identified opportunities for improvement. Additionally, the evaluation process enhanced institutional understanding of the European Approach and further developed QQI's capability to support and assess joint programmes.

#### Key Learnings

The evaluation of the *Pathfinder – Joint International BA in Film* underscored the need for early planning, clear communication between the lead institution and QA agency, and collaborative self-assessment with external review. It led to minor amendments in QQI's joint programme procedures, such as formal follow-ups with QA agencies after publication. This process laid a solid foundation for future European Approach evaluations.

### Evaluation of a Joint Programme using the European Approach

During 2025, QQI conducted its first evaluation of a joint programme implementing [Procedures for the QA of Joint Programmes Based on the European Approach](#) published the previous year. See the case study on the next page.

### Update guidelines on assessment to ensure that they reflect changing teaching and learning contexts including the use of artificial intelligence

Rethinking assessment: development of revised guidelines on quality assurance of assessment of QQI further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE) awards

Following a consultation process undertaken in 2024 on proposed interim updates to assessment guidelines for providers of programmes leading to QQI FET awards, QQI finalised updated interim assessment guidelines. These comprised:

- [Quality assuring assessment interim guidelines for providers](#)
- [Quality assuring assessment interim guidelines for external authenticators](#)

### Devolve more responsibility for programme validation and sharing of national further education and training programmes to the Education and Training Boards to enable them to develop flexible and innovative programmes for their learners

### Development of shared structures and systems across the ETB sector to enable devolved responsibility for new programme evaluation

During 2025, QQI commenced engagement with the ETB sector on a pilot to devolve responsibility for management of parts of the validation process. Based on their track record regarding programme development and validation, seven ETBs were invited to engage with the pilot. Draft procedures for devolved responsibility in the ETB sector were developed in the third quarter of 2025, and a consultation process with the sector concluded in quarter four. QQI will begin accepting applications for devolved responsibility from participating ETBs in quarter one 2026.

### Develop quality assurance guidelines for a single system of apprenticeship, for work-integrated learning and for programmes that span the tertiary education sector

#### Statutory quality assurance guidelines on work-integrated learning

Following stakeholder engagement in 2024 to inform the development of statutory quality assurance guidelines on work-integrated learning, QQI published two preparatory reports in April 2025:

- [Quality Assuring Work-integrated Learning in Irish Tertiary Education](#), a thematic analysis of the perspectives and experiences of a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in work-integrated learning
- [Work-integrated Learning practice in Ireland](#), which outlines the types of work-integrated learning currently practised in Irish further education and training

and higher education as reported by practitioners in those sectors

Building on the findings of these reports, [Draft Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines on Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning](#) were published for consultation in July 2025. The consultation period closed in October 2025 and analysis of the responses is ongoing.

**Enable greater understanding of overseas qualifications by providers, employers, and international learners, including displaced persons and refugees, through the NARIC Ireland service**

QQI hosts NARIC Ireland, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre, which is responsible for providing authoritative information to support the recognition of foreign academic qualifications. This free, online service offers comparisons, where appropriate, to major awards on the NFQ and forms part of the wider ENIC-NARIC international network. In the context of Ireland's participation in the Bologna Process, NARIC Ireland contributes to strengthening automatic and mutual recognition arrangements and works closely with competent authorities to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, partial qualifications, and learning achieved by refugees, displaced persons, and migrants. This work underpins mobility and recognition within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and for holders of Irish qualifications seeking opportunities abroad.

Over the past year, demand for NARIC Ireland's services increased by more than 11% for comparability statement downloads, and by 4% for page views of the Foreign Qualifications Database. These increases reflect continuing growth in international mobility and a more diversely qualified labour market. The NARIC database expanded further, with an additional 230 comparability statements added, bringing the total to over 2,000 award titles. While website usage patterns and demand for comparability statements continue to be driven by users in Brazil, India, Ukraine, Spain and the UK, the overall volume of activity has risen by approximately 11% annually.

In addition, individual queries received via email, via the CRM platform and by telephone, increased by 17% compared with 2024. These interactions provide valuable insight into the needs of service users and directly inform ongoing service development.

**Communication of NARIC Ireland service**

To support, maintain, and promote a deeper understanding of qualifications recognition and the role of the NARIC Ireland service, a coordinated communications approach was further developed and implemented in a manner consistent with QQI's organisational values. In keeping with QQI's commitment to transparency, fairness, and impartiality, updated promotional materials were produced to clearly communicate the service offering, and to outline the three-step approach to recognising foreign qualifications. These materials were designed to ensure accuracy, accessibility, and consistency for all stakeholders. Reflecting a collaborative and inclusive approach, digital outreach was strengthened, enhancing visibility across social media and progressing the redevelopment of the International Mobility and Prior Learning

Division's webpages to support coherent and user-centred communication.

Stakeholder engagement, undertaken in a consultative and collaborative manner, remained a core element of this work. Participation in a broad range of events and the delivery of targeted presentations to public, community, and education sector partners helped to build shared understanding and reinforce confidence in the national qualifications recognition system. Aligned with QQI's commitment to trust, integrity, and evidence-based practice, the service also continued systematic monitoring of misinformation to ensure that regulatory bodies, government departments, and other partners received reliable and up-to-date information.

### Sharing of NARIC statistical information with stakeholders

In line with organisational values of transparency, integrity, and evidence-based practice, NARIC Ireland completed and published the 2025 statistical reports on the recognition of foreign qualifications: [NARIC Ireland 2025 statistics](#). The publication of these statistics reflects QQI's commitment to exercising its regulatory responsibilities in a fair and objective manner, providing stakeholders with clear and reliable insights into the operation and utilisation of the NARIC service. Dissemination of the findings through QQI's monthly ezine, the QT, and through targeted social media communications ensured wide accessibility and supported a shared responsibility to strengthen confidence in Ireland's qualifications recognition system. This initiative further demonstrates dedication to learning, continuous improvement, and the use of research and analysis to inform policy, support partners, and deliver measurable

impact across the education and training landscape.

### International Treaties on the Recognition of Qualifications

*Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)*

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) was adopted in 1997 and was signed by Ireland in 2004. In 2025, as part of the TrustEd Ireland quality mark process, QQI assessed how 28 higher education providers in Ireland are currently discharging their obligations under the LRC. The assessment provides baseline information on recognition practice in Irish higher education and will provide a significant contextual framework for future policy and practice developments in this area. The TrustEd Ireland reports are available at: [TrustEd Ireland Reports | Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#). QQI is a participant on the Bologna Thematic Peer Group B, which is concerned with progressing Key Commitment 2 of the EHEA and requires member countries to ensure national legislation and procedures are compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. QQI is also represented on Thematic Peer Group A which focuses on qualifications frameworks and on Thematic Peer Group C.

### Other Treaties

QQI supports the Department of Further and Higher Education, and Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), in advancing its considerations of commitment to both the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (GRC) and the Treaty on the

Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. QQI presented its perspectives on the GRC at a National Engagement Process Webinar hosted by DFHERIS in June 2025 and attended the Second Session of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to GRC. It continues to liaise closely with DFHERIS, UNESCO (GRC Bureau) and the ENIC-NARIC network to advance national preparation to accede to the GRC. Established in 2021, the Treaty on the Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications is a multilateral treaty that arose from initiatives by the Benelux and Baltic states to make progress towards automatic mutual recognition, and provides for automatic recognition of Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral degrees among signatory states. QQI advises DFHERIS on the technical aspects of qualifications recognition as it advances preparation for Ireland's accession to the treaty.

### **Review the policy and criteria for programme validation to ensure that they are proportionate for the volume and level of the QQI award being offered**

#### **Facilitation of variant processes for validation, proportionate to the volume and level of the QQI award**

QQI continued to engage with ETBs during 2025 to support a proportionate process for validation of small volume micro-qualification programmes through the SOLAS Skills to Advance programme. The efficient sharing of validated curricula across the sector continued to be supported by a proportionate differential validation process. During 2025, 17 micro-qualification programmes were validated by QQI for the ETB sector, with 60 differential validations to facilitate shared curricula.

In 2025, QQI commenced its extension of scope process to facilitate providers to validate programmes using blended and fully online modes following the conclusion of the Covid-19 contingency measures. The first five applications were determined by QQI's Programmes and Awards Executive Committee in 2025. This process will continue into 2026.

### **Streamline the QQI Common Awards Systems (CAS) and develop more broad standards for QQI awards to enable agile programme development by providers**

#### **Implement and monitor 2023 CAS review findings and approach in the field of healthcare**

#### **Review of Healthcare Standards at NFQ Level 5**

Healthcare awards at NFQ Level 5 represent one of the largest areas of QQI certification activity and were identified as a priority for review in QQI's Outline Action Plan for the Review and Renewal of Common Award Standards. Building on work initiated in 2024, QQI progressed a review of five major healthcare awards in the Common Awards System. In October 2025, QQI published a suite of Draft Award Standards in Healthcare at NFQ Level 5 aimed at reducing duplication, strengthening coherence and improving alignment with contemporary healthcare practice and workforce needs. The consultation comprised:

- draft Broad Award Standards for Essentials of Healthcare Assistance and Person-centred Care to support flexible programme development across diverse healthcare contexts
- two draft Defined Award Standards at NFQ Level 5, focused on Healthcare Support and Pre-Nursing Studies.

The proposed Defined Award Standards represent a departure from the legacy CAS structure for QQI FET awards, introducing more clearly defined award architectures designed around specific vocational contexts. The draft standards were developed with input from healthcare providers, sectoral bodies, further education and training providers, higher education educators, employers, and subject matter experts. Feedback gathered through the 2025 consultation period is informing refinement of the standards, which are expected to be finalised in 2026.

### **New Integrated Awards Standards for Community Development/Community Work at NFQ Levels 5-6**

In March 2025, QQI published new integrated award standards for Community Development and Community Work at NFQ Levels 5–6. The standards reflect a strong collaborative process, bringing together community work organisations, further education and training providers, higher education educators, sectoral representatives and subject matter experts. The work was led by the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training (AIEB).

### **New Awards Standards for Youth Work at NFQ Level 5**

New QQI award standards for Youth Work at NFQ Level 5, published in March 2025, were developed through a standards development process incorporating contributions from youth work organisations, FET providers, HE youth work educators, sectoral representatives and other subject matter experts. The North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) for Youth Work, hosted by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), chaired the standards development group.

### **Conduct due diligence assessment of private providers for their fitness to offer regulated education and training**

#### **Incorporation of due diligence process into the provider approval process for applicant providers**

The first applications for due diligence evaluation were submitted in March 2025 as part of the application process for authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. A total of 17 English language providers made a submission. These applications were submitted via the interactive online process, which was developed in 2024, to facilitate providers in demonstrating that they meet the “capacity and capability criteria” specified in ministerial regulations. The online portal is part of an integrated IT process developed for the management of TrustEd Ireland mark applications. The applications were processed through a number of stages, including a screening phase and an evaluation stage. The findings of each evaluation are detailed in a comprehensive report for each applicant provider.

#### **Implementation of the Due Dilligence process, both an integrated process and a standard process**

In parallel, a separate Due Diligence portal (Standard Process) was developed to manage the Due Diligence evaluation of all other providers that engage with QQI across a range of services. QQI applicant providers are required to demonstrate that they meet the “capacity and capability criteria” outlined in ministerial regulations. During 2025, the first applicant providers for initial access to programme validation and first application by an existing

provider was submitted through the Due Diligence Standard Process.

### **Issue the TrustEd Ireland quality mark to English language education and higher education providers who comply with a statutory code of practice for providing education to international learners**

#### **TrustEd Ireland Applications and Assessment Window One: HE Pathway**

In 2025, the first application window opened for TrustEd Ireland, closing in March. The application, called the International Education Mark Application Statement (IEMAS), is a self-assessment that providers completed to demonstrate compliance with applicable criteria set out in the Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners (HE Code). Providers were required to demonstrate compliance in the IEMAS and to provide evidence to support compliance, including links to publicly available documentation and appendices. Following initial screening of reports by the QQI executive, a Screening Report was sent to each provider requesting further documentation.

Assessment panels were established to assess each provider's demonstration of compliance. Panels comprised four members: the chair, the report writer, an international education expert and a learner representative. Following desk-based assessments, each provider received an Outstanding Queries Report seeking any necessary further information and documentation.

Following moderation by the QQI Internal Review Group, draft assessment reports were sent to providers, who had the opportunity

to review their report for factual accuracy, and to respond to the report.

Final assessment reports were submitted to QQI's Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC) which met four times between November and December 2025. Providers were notified of the outcome of their application following the final ARC meeting in December, with formal notification in February 2026.

#### **Please find below links to the 28 TrustEd Ireland HE Pathway assessment reports:**

1. [Atlantic Technological University](#)
2. [CCT College Dublin](#)
3. [Dorset College](#)
4. [Dublin Business School](#)
5. [Dublin City University](#)
6. [Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology](#)
7. [Dundalk Institute of Technology](#)
8. [Galway Business School](#)
9. [Griffith College](#)
10. [Holmes Institute Dublin](#)
11. [ICD Business School](#)
12. [Independent College](#)
13. [Institute of Banking](#)
14. [Mary Immaculate College Limerick](#)
15. [Maynooth University](#)
16. [Munster Technological University](#)
17. [National College of Art and Design](#)
18. [National College of Ireland](#)
19. [RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences](#)
20. [Royal Irish Academy of Music](#)
21. [South East Technological University](#)
22. [Technological University Dublin](#)
23. [Technological University of the Shannon](#)

- [24. Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin](#)
- [25. University College Cork](#)
- [26. University College Dublin](#)
- [27. University of Galway](#)
- [28. University of Limerick](#)

### TrustEd Ireland applications and assessment Window One: ELE Pathway

A parallel assessment of ELE providers commenced during the same Window One period. 17 ELE providers submitted applications by the end of March 2025. Assessment of ELE providers continues into 2026.

### Confirmations of application Window Two: HE and ELE Pathways

In September 2025, 7 HE providers and 61 ELE providers confirmed their intention to apply for TrustEd Ireland authorisation in Window Two. The final date for submission of applications for Window Two is 27 March 2026.



## Priority 3:

### Share valuable system-wide insights, research and analysis with key stakeholders

#### Improve data analytics capacity to create QQI dashboards that provide systems-level indicators on quality and qualifications

##### Biannually updated interactive dashboards on the certification of QQI awards

In 2025, work on the development of a new certification database was completed. This database supports the production, analysis and dissemination of high-quality statistics on QQI certification data. These statistics are disseminated through a suite of [interactive dashboards](#), providing transparent access to information and enabling users to explore trends across certification types, NFQ levels and learner characteristics. The outputs are designed to enhance accessibility, usability and analytical value for a wide range of stakeholders.

In addition to ongoing dissemination activity, a range of analytical publications and outputs were produced in 2025 including:

- [Analysis of results from the Generative Artificial Intelligence survey](#): interactive dashboards and a PDF report were published, presenting the views of learners and staff on the use of, and preparedness for, artificial intelligence across education institutions in Ireland,

including higher education, further education and training, and English language education.

- [IRQ data report](#): a short analytical report was produced using data from the IRQ portal, providing an overview of the qualifications included and key characteristics of recognition activity.
- [From FET to HE](#): the analysis of the performance of CAO applicants holding QQI FET awards was updated with data for 2025 and published. This analysis looks at applicants who achieved a Level 5 or 6 major award in a single sitting and applied to the CAO in the same academic year, exploring trends in participation, subject mix and attainment over time using QQI certification data and CAO points outcomes.
- Statistical modelling of honours bachelor's degree classification: an analysis was undertaken to examine patterns and outcomes in degree classifications across a number of higher education institutions. The study analyses trends over time using a combination of QQI certification data and HEA pseudonymised microdata accessed through the CSO's Educational Longitudinal Database (ELD). It focuses on selected programmes agreed with contributing HEIs and combines quantitative trend analysis, applying complex statistical models, with contextual programme and cohort information, alongside qualitative institutional input to support interpretation of observed patterns.

#### QQI application for ISSCoP certification for QQI awards-related data

In parallel, as a result of the work outlined above, an [Open Data policy](#) relating to QQI

certification was developed in Q4 2025, alongside clearly defined protocols governing researcher access to microdata. These arrangements strengthen data governance, statistical quality and confidentiality, and support the systematic management of data for statistical purposes.

This work is central to QQI's progress towards compliance with the [Irish Statistical System Code of Practice](#) (ISSCoP). ISSCoP is the national quality framework for Official Statistics in Ireland, coordinated by the [Central Statistics Office](#), and sets out principles relating to professional independence, accessibility and clarity, commitment to quality, timeliness, and statistical confidentiality. Compliance with ISSCoP provides assurance that statistics are produced in an objective, transparent and methodologically sound manner, and is essential for building trust and confidence in official statistical outputs. Achieving ISSCoP compliance also supports the formal designation of QQI outputs as Official Statistics and underpins the establishment of the QQI Data Liaison Officer role.

### **Share guidance and thought leadership with providers in assessment and artificial intelligence**

#### **Publication of a snapshot report on artificial intelligence in FET, HE and ELE and survey of staff and learners**

In December 2024, QQI commenced a data collection project to support its understanding of the implications of GenAI for the Irish tertiary education system. QQI sought data on the views, uses and response of key stakeholders from the Irish further educational and training, higher education and English language education sectors.

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.

For the learner and staff surveys, data were collected between December 2024 and February 2025 using SurveyMonkey and were analysed by QQI using Tableau and SurveyMonkey software. QQI published the [Generative Artificial Intelligence Survey Report 2025](#), an analysis of the results from the surveys, accompanied by a [Statistical Analysis](#) of the survey responses in 2025. The surveys involved 1,229 staff and 1,005 learners, exploring their knowledge, attitudes, institutional support, and expectations about GenAI's impact on education and the workplace.

The findings highlight the complexities and varied perspectives surrounding GenAI in education. It underscored the urgent need for clear policies, comprehensive training, and thoughtful integration of GenAI tools to ensure equitable benefits and to uphold academic integrity, while preparing learners for future work and learning.

QQI will report the findings of providers' responses relating to organisation considerations and approaches in 2026.

#### **Rethinking assessment: publication of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the variation in honours bachelor's degree classifications 2012-2022**

During 2024-2025, QQI and other degree awarding bodies collaborated on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of variations on honours bachelor's degree classification

between 2012-2022. In 2025, QQI conducted the meta-analysis of the institutional findings and programme case studies alongside statistical modelling. The draft report will be shared with participating institutions in the first half of 2026.

### **Publish system-level analysis of annual monitoring and periodic evaluation of providers, using artificial intelligence where appropriate**

#### **Thematic analysis of 2025 annual quality reporting and dissemination of the findings**

In October 2024, QQI launched its Provider Quality Reporting (PQR) process for further education and training providers that had either completed reengagement or Initial Access to Validation of programmes leading to QQI awards (IAV). Reengagement is the process QQI put in place to facilitate providers which engaged with QQI's predecessor agencies to submit revised quality assurance procedures to QQI for approval. The PQR enables providers to report on their progress in embedding and enhancing the quality assurance procedures approved through reengagement or IAV, and it supports the dissemination of good practice across the sector.

Using certification data supplied by QQI, 84 private, community, and voluntary FET providers submitted PQRs in 2025. Reporting will continue into 2026, and QQI plans to carry out a thematic analysis of the submissions. This analysis will offer insights to providers, QQI, and other stakeholders on developments within the sector since reengagement.

### **Thematic analysis of reports produced in QQI programme validation processes 2018-2024**

In November 2025, QQI, working with a research team, commenced a project for the thematic analysis of QQI validation reports from September 2018 to 2024, analysing themes, trends and effectiveness of reporting.

QQI is the main statutory awarding body for educational qualifications in Ireland, and the external quality assurance agency in the further education and training sector and the independent higher education sector. QQI programme validation reports offer a rich and unique source of information on the evolving nature of provision within the respective sectors. The project also encompassed an analysis of QQI's validation activities for this period for emerging trends and characteristics. A report of the findings of this analysis is expected in 2026.

### **Maximise the impact of insights, research and analysis through effective communications across all platforms**

#### **QQI's research priorities 2025-27**

As part of QQI's strategic priority to share valuable system-wide insights, research and analysis with the sector, in late 2025 it set out to establish its internal research priorities for the coming years. This work was initiated with a series of internal exploratory sessions with divisions across QQI to gather initial potential ideas, areas of interest or investigation. This work will continue into 2026.



## Priority 4:

### Deepen national and international partnerships

**Inform and influence education and training policy through our relationships with government, public funders, providers and their representative bodies, and other stakeholders**

Engagement with key national and international stakeholders involved in recognition and RPL, on current thinking, practice and implementation, including support for DFHERIS in establishing a policy roadmap

QQI continued to support the development of the RPL Practitioner Network Ireland, a community of practice for people working and interested in recognition of prior learning (RPL), which facilitates networking opportunities for the diversity of the RPL practitioners, as well as providing a platform for awareness raising about RPL and for collaboration to inform, engage with and contribute to policy, at the local, national and international levels. The network celebrated its 10th Anniversary in 2025, which was marked by an event held in Athlone on 5 November entitled '[Building a Culture of Recognition](#)'.

QQI also continues to engage internationally on matters pertaining to RPL and its relationship with qualifications recognition. On 27 May 2025, QQI co-presented a workshop with the European Commission at the ENIC-NARIC Joint Meeting in Tirana, entitled 'A holistic approach to flexibility and lifelong learning: Recognition and RPL, policy and practice at EU and national

level' [ENIC-NARIC ANNUAL JOINT MEETING 2025 WORKSHOPS COMPENDIUM](#).

**Support the National Framework for Doctoral Education Advisory Forum, co-chaired by QQI and the HEA. Manage and collaborate with stakeholders via the working groups reporting to the National Framework for Doctoral Education (NFDE) Advisory Forum**

Four meetings of the National Framework for Doctoral Education (NFDE) Advisory Forum, co-chaired by the Higher Education Authority and Quality and Qualifications Ireland, took place in 2025. Membership of the forum includes representatives from institutions offering doctoral education in Ireland, state agencies, government departments, funding bodies, and student representatives.

In April, QQI was invited to contribute to the PRIDE (Association for Professionals in Doctoral Education) Network Conference 'Back to the Future. The Next Two Decades of Doctoral Education' at University College London. QQI's presentation highlighted the role of the NFDE and the resources produced collaboratively via the working groups reporting to the advisory forum.

With the Irish Universities Association (IUA), QQI co-sponsored the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Symposium in June 2025 at Maynooth University. The theme of the symposium was 'Reflecting on Doctoral Supervision: Innovations, Challenges and Future Directions'. The keynote of the symposium focused on the use of artificial intelligence in doctoral research. The conference included presentations from individual experts in doctoral education, as well as from AHEAD, the IUA, and QQI.

## Community / Voluntary Sector (CVS) Provider Forum

In 2025, Quality and Qualifications Ireland hosted online meetings of its Community/Voluntary Sector Provider Forum. The meetings offered opportunities for providers to share their perspectives on their experience of using QQI's Programme Derived Award Standards and to learn more about programme validation and QQI's requirements regarding applications for blended and fully online provision.

## Lead national and international networks to combat the increasing threats to academic integrity

### Regulatory activity

QQI continues to monitor social media and advertising platforms for potential infringements of Section 43A of the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) \(Amendment\) Act 2019](#) ("the Act") and to identify trends or themes in the advertisement of contract cheating services. In carrying out this function, QQI currently has active reporting lines with TikTok and YouTube (Google), along with DoneDeal, Adverts and Gumtree. Although no infringements of the Act have been identified on the latter three platforms in almost a year, QQI continues to monitor them. In contrast, QQI has routinely identified infringements of the Act on TikTok and YouTube (Google), all of which were reported to the platforms for removal. Between October 2024 and September 2025, 100% of content reported by QQI to TikTok and YouTube (Google) was removed.

Content reported by QQI and removed by each platform:

- TikTok - 81 reports of content infringing Section 43A
- YouTube - 84 reports of content infringing Section 43A.

QQI welcomes the continued cooperation of these platforms in tackling the advertisement of contract cheating. Furthermore, QQI notes a commitment by social media and other platforms to demonstrate corporate responsibility and take action to prevent contract cheating services being advertised. This commitment is demonstrated by platforms through their community standards and guidelines. For example, "*content which provides instructions for academic cheating*" is noted within YouTube's [illegal or regulated goods or services policies](#) as content that is not permitted on YouTube. Similarly, [Meta's guidelines](#) states that the platform does not allow content that "*involves sharing, selling, trading or buying of: future exam papers or answer sheets, and products or services that enable cheating in exams*".

The visibility of these commitments within the platform's standards and guidelines provide an opportunity for individuals to report potential advertisements of cheating service through the platform's public reporting channels.

## The National Academic Integrity Network

The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) is a peer-driven network, established in November 2019 by QQI. The network comprises membership from further and higher education providers, institutions, students and student representatives, state agencies and organisations working in further and higher education in Ireland.

A new NAIN Chair, Dr Mary-Clarie Kennedy, University of Limerick, was appointed along with a new steering committee in June 2025, including Dr Justin Tonra, University of Galway, who was appointed as Vice-Chair of NAIN.

Both the NAIN and the NAIN Steering Committee have updated their terms of reference, which are available to read here: [National Academic Integrity Network | Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#)

QQI would like to thank and acknowledge the work of the former NAIN Chair, Billy Kelly and the NAIN steering committee who contributed significantly to NAIN's establishment and progress from 2019-2025.

### NAIN Strategy 2025-2028

The NAIN Strategy 2025-2028 was launched during National Academic Integrity Week in October 2025; this week coincides with the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI) International Day of Academic Integrity.

The four goals of the strategy are to:

- empower NAIN members to foster a culture of academic integrity
- provide leadership and stewardship in the field of academic integrity in further and higher education
- develop, collate and disseminate resources to assist stakeholders across the sector in upholding academic integrity
- develop and enhance the network by facilitating engagement and collaboration between NAIN members and relevant European and international agencies and experts.

Five working groups have been established to support the implementation of the NAIN

Strategy. These groups have specific remits and focus on various areas including assessment integrity and innovation, learner engagement and partnership and communications and outreach.

[The strategy is published on the QQI website.](#)

### Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms Version 2

*Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms Version 2* was published in December 2025 and built on the earlier version, published in 2021. This document supports those working in tertiary education by promoting consistent language and a shared understanding of academic integrity.

The publication focuses on principles for learners and for providers, which include:

- honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in all academic work
- clear communication of expectations and sanctions for misconduct
- support for appropriate use of emerging technologies, including AI.

### NAIN masterclass

In June 2025, NAIN and QQI collaborated with The Centre for Assessment Research, Policy and Practice in Education (CARPE) and Dublin City University (DCU) to host a masterclass with Professor Phillip Dawson, Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE), Deakin University. The masterclass entitled 'Assessment design for a time of artificial intelligence' was hosted at Dublin City University.

Dr Mary-Claire Kennedy, NAIN Chair, also interviewed Professor Dawson for the NAIN Podcast Series and the episode is available on QQI's YouTube Channel here: [NAIN Podcast Series: Professor Phillip Dawson on Assessment design in a time of AI](#).

### The Global Academic Integrity Network

The Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN), a joint initiative of QQI and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (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, supports awareness-raising among members and the development of common, global approaches to disrupting the industry that has grown around contract cheating and academic fraud.

The GAIN meets quarterly and during 2025, there were updates from members of the network on academic integrity research conducted by academics and agencies in member countries, on new trends in the contract cheating industry, and on research integrity.

By the end of 2025, the GAIN had grown to 48 members from five continents across 37 countries. The GAIN is endorsed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI); the Council of Europe and the European Students Union.

### International engagement on academic integrity

QQI presented on academic integrity and joined a plenary panel discussion at the European Conference on Ethics and Integrity in Academia (ECEIA) hosted in Uppsala University in June 2025. QQI was also successful in its pitch to the AGM of the European Academic Integrity Network (ENAI) to host the 2027 ECEIA conference in Ireland, for the first time.

In October, QQI was invited to contribute to the 6th African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) Continental Forum, in an effort to expand its membership of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN) in Africa. African country members currently include Kenya, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia.

NAIN and QQI collaborated with the University of Bournemouth on their academic integrity webinar series in 2025, which focused on international experts sharing recent research on academic integrity.

### Assist in the development of mechanisms to effectively engage learners in the quality of their education and training through work with a diversity of learner representative and advocacy bodies

#### QQI's work with learners

QQI continued to engage with learner representatives across its functions and programmes of engagement in 2025. This included engagement directly with representative bodies such as Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (AMLEÉ) and participation in the National FET Learner Forum, hosted by AONTAS.

QQI also participated in judging and sponsoring the Learner Voice Category at the Aontas STAR Awards 2025 and the Education Campaign of the Year at the 2025 AMLÉ Student Achievement Awards.

### National Student Engagement Programme

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) has been supported by a partnership between QQI, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and AMLÉ since its establishment in 2016. NStEP's vision is to inform, guide and support an Irish higher education landscape that fosters student engagement and the building of meaningful staff-student partnerships within and beyond institutions.

### Student Training Programme

To commence the academic year 2024-2025, NStEP held its annual Train the Trainer event in August 2024, preparing student trainers to deliver its Student Training Programme sessions. NStEP delivered 65 student training sessions this academic year, training 703 students across all its training modules. This brought the total number of students trained by NStEP at the end of this period to 7,701.

Student Reviewer requests were received steadily throughout the academic year 2024-25, with over 80 requests received. More than 70 student reviewers participated in the Student Quality Assurance Reviewers Pool for 2024-25.

### National Postgraduate Engagement Network

In late 2025, NStEP and AMLÉ established the National Postgraduate Engagement Network, which held its first meeting in November.

### New NStEP Partnerships

30 institutions across Ireland participate in NStEP including the following members, which joined in 2025: City College Dublin, IBAT College Dublin, the National College of Art and Design, and University College Dublin.

### Contribute to good practice in quality assurance and qualifications by deepening strategic relationships with partner agencies in Europe and worldwide

#### NCQAA study visit

In December, QQI hosted a study visit from the National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation (NCQAA) in Qatar. The delegation met with colleagues from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to learn more about Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). They were also welcomed by two universities for discussions on their quality assurance processes and policies.

The NCQAA delegation contributed to QQI's third annual quality enhancement event 'Quality in Higher Education: Sectoral findings and Enhancement showcase' where they shared perspectives on quality assurance from Qatar.

### International Engagement with Quality Assurance and Qualifications Agencies

In line with its international memoranda of understanding with international agencies, QQI met with the executives of TEQSA, Australia, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), UK, during 2025. Discussions focused on recent national developments in quality assurance and qualifications and strategic planning initiatives.

## **Use of statutory memoranda with the further and higher education funding authorities to contribute towards developing and improving the quality of an integrated tertiary education system**

### **HEA - QQI Memorandum of Understanding**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) published their fourth memorandum of understanding (MoU) in June 2025. This is the first MoU between the two organisations to have a statutory basis under the Education Authority Act, 2022.

The MoU includes a number of shared priorities for cooperation including:

- academic integrity
- access, transfer and progression
- apprenticeship and national tertiary degrees
- data
- the implementation of the National Framework for Doctoral Education
- quality assured micro-credentials
- student engagement
- TrustEd Ireland and maintaining and building on Ireland's international reputation for high quality higher education provision.

The MoU is published on the QQI website at this link: [mou-between-the-higher-education-authority-hea-and-quality-and-qualifications-ireland-qqi-june-2025.pdf](#)

## **Partnership with professional and statutory regulatory bodies to streamline national systems of professional accreditation and academic validation of programmes which lead to admission to regulated professions for learners**

### **Finding Common Ground – QQI's engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies**

In 2025, QQI continued its programme of engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and higher education institutions. Three 'Finding Common Ground' events took place online during February and April with a final event in person in November.

Themes included RPL, balancing quality assurance requirements in programme delivery, aligning accreditation with programme reviews, monitoring, and revalidation of a joint evaluation process.

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## CASE STUDY:

### First joint academic validation and professional accreditation process

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In March 2025, QQI validated an MSc in Information and Library Management and a Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Information and Library Management. This validation process marked QQI's first joint academic validation and professional accreditation process. QQI worked with Dublin Business School (DBS) and the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) to design a single, integrated process that included a common panel and a shared site visit. This collaboration resulted in two outputs: a validation report and decision issued by QQI, and an accreditation report and decision issued by LAI.

QQI hopes to build on this experience and pursue similar collaborative approaches with other PSRBs. The aim is to reduce the regulatory burden on providers and to ensure that QQI's validation processes are aligned with, and complementary to, the regulatory requirements of PSRBs.

### **Support of capacity-building in the Education and Training Boards in strategic partnership with funding authorities, provider representative bodies and other stakeholders**

QQI supports capacity development and innovative programme development across Education and Training Boards by providing best practice guidance on quality and qualification matters including:

- the publication of Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Learning Programmes
- new broad standards in business, Youth Work and Community Development
- provider briefings
- the development of efficient mechanisms to facilitate programme validation and programme sharing across the ETB sector and working collaboratively with SOLAS to identify sector needs.

### **Integration of the English language education sector within QQI's regulatory and quality assurance frameworks, in collaboration with provider and learner representative bodies**

#### **ELE Assessment Event**

QQI's International Education Division organised an in-person assessment event for the ELE sector in November 2025 at the Dublin Royal Convention Centre. The aim of this event was two-fold: to further support ELE providers in preparing to align their assessments to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as part of the requirements for providers preparing to apply for TrustEd Ireland authorisation, and to offer other providers,

including English language centres at higher education institutions, the opportunity to explore options for the integration of external proficiency exams into ELE programmes.

The presenter of the event was Thom Kiddle, Director of Norwich Institute for Language Education and Chair of Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality Language Services (Eaquals). He has been involved in the CEFR alignment project that QQI initiated with providers in 2022. The aim of this project has been to support providers as they prepare to submit their TrustEd Ireland application, and a series of events was held between 2022 and 2025.

The agenda included:

- a review of assessment principles embedded in the ELE Code of Practice and the QA Guidelines for ELE
- information on a range of ELE exams accepted by key stakeholders e.g., HEIs in Ireland, immigration services in Ireland and internationally and multinational employers
- a focus on how exam preparation can be built into principled ELE programme design
- a look at the development of exam strategies and language development
- suggested achievable approaches for providers to transition to a new exam if the current exams used did not meet the TrustEd Ireland requirements in terms of Access, Transfer and Progression
- an exploration of the potential for positive impact on learners and learner needs.

Attendees included ELE providers from across the country, as well as English language centres at higher education institutions.

## Mandelan johtajuusopetukset 2 minuutissa

3. Jos haluat johtaa ihmisiä,  
objektivinen tieto ei riitä,  
koska ihmiset ovat  
subjektia.
- A. Ennio Miettisen periaate



## Priority 5:

Create a resilient and agile organisation delivering responsive, transparent, and effective services

**Create a diverse and inclusive workplace that identifies QQI as an employer of choice, by enabling a culture that values equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), achieving workplace quality marks and providing a technology-enabled hybrid working environment which is consistent with our climate and sustainability obligations**

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

In 2025, QQI advanced equality, diversity and inclusion by strengthening how it serves a diverse learner and provider landscape and by building a more inclusive, resilient organisation and supporting delivery of our strategic priorities on trusted regulation and organisational agility.

Activities and impact in 2025:

- embedded EDI as a defined competency indicator in the new Integrated Broad Award Standards for Business (levels 5–9)
- integrated EDI considerations into Draft Broad Award Standards for Essentials of Healthcare Assistance and Person-centred Care
- improved accessibility of information for international and mobile learners through NARIC Ireland guidance available in multiple languages
- aligned corporate values with EDI principles through a staff workshop (February 2025)
- established an organisational EDI baseline through an all-staff survey to target actions and track progress over the strategy period
- built staff capability to deliver inclusive services through targeted learning (e.g., disability and dyslexia awareness, inclusive language) and Plain English supports that improve clarity and accessibility of QQI communications
- sustained EDI governance through the EDI Steering Group and EDI Champions Network, with progress monitored through reporting to the QQI Board.

### Implement recommendations from the mid-term review of the KeepWell Mark and achieve the mark for a further two years

QQI was successful in its reaccreditation application for IBEC's KeepWell Mark™ award in 2025. QQI was also selected in the Top 100 Companies Leading in Wellbeing Index in association with Business and Finance. These achievements reflect ongoing dedication to fostering a safe and healthy work environment, where the wellbeing of every employee is at the heart of organisational policy.

### Endeavour to improve QQI's standing as an employer of choice through review of recruitment processes and the implementation of our EDI-focused HR Strategy 2025-2027

QQI has fully incorporated the capability framework into its recruitment campaigns with the aim of fostering a more agile and responsive workforce to meet the evolving

needs of the organisation in the future. This enhanced framework is designed to help attract and select talent that aligns with QQI's strategic objectives. Employees have a variety of career paths and mobility opportunities, and QQI invests in people through training and education, wellbeing strategies and career development. Through continued support, every employee is encouraged to embrace new learning opportunities and to further their professional growth. The opportunities provided help expand expertise and skills and also ensure staff can make meaningful contributions to the organisation and to the wider community.

In November, QQI published, for the first time, its Gender Pay Gap Report, which sets out its commitment to establishing and maintaining a culture of EDI underpinning its work in the enhancement and regulation of quality in tertiary education and training. As an equal opportunities employer, QQI works to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion where it strives to embrace equality of opportunity through recruitment and selection processes. QQI employees are supported, where possible, through work-life balance and family friendly initiatives that enable flexible working arrangements. QQI continues to offer gender equality learning and development opportunities to staff.

QQI continues to implement its HR Strategy 2025-2027, to support and reinforce the organisation's statement of strategy by maintaining alignment across every aspect of its work. By focusing on key strategic HR objectives, QQI is committed to upholding the organisation's vision and driving progress in line with broader goals.

## Strengthening Cybersecurity

During 2025, keeping QQI's digital environment secure remained a top priority. QQI ICT transitioned to a state-of-the-art Security Operations Centre (SOC) that operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. In 2025, the team applied over 1,000 security patches and completed comprehensive vulnerability testing, identifying and addressing 2,011 potential security issues.

QQI also reduced the number of false security alerts by reviewing and improving monitoring rules, helping ICT staff respond more quickly to the events that matter most.

QQI security audit alerts dropped significantly, from 344 to 136 after optimisation efforts.

## Implementation of an internal quality assurance infrastructure that includes a comprehensive data strategy and efficient records management systems

During 2025, QQI's internal Information and Quality Governance programme of work continued to focus the implementation of identified improvements in the areas of internal quality assurance and records management.

Achievements in 2025 included:

- the development and launch of a new staff intranet
- the development and launch of a new internal policies repository
- annual digital clean-up month initiatives, including a staff awareness campaign and refresher training sessions on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and on Freedom of Information (FOI)

- the implementation of a revised records retention process and approach
- the development of a new QQI Customer Charter and Customer Charter Action Plan

**Work with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to ensure that QQI has stable, predictable, and sustainable income streams leading to greater transparency of fees and charges for QQI services, and greater value for money**

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 2025-2027. An associated three-year oversight agreement (covering the period 2024-2026) was also developed and agreed in 2024. This agreement was subsequently revised following the development of the new statement of strategy in 2025. QQI meets several times a year with department officials to review progress under the agreements.

**Improve services to stakeholders through user-centred design of information and communications technologies, business processes and platforms, and exploration of the potential of artificial intelligence, in line with guidance for its use in the Irish public service**

In 2025, QQI's ICT team made strong progress in improving the digital systems that support

providers, evaluators and staff. The focus for the year was on enhancing reliability, strengthening security, and delivering new and improved digital services.

**Delivering Better Digital Services**

QQI continued to expand and improve its online systems. Several new features for both staff and providers were delivered, completing 44% more business focused enhancements and additional technical improvements, when compared with the previous year. This resulted in smoother processes and better functionality across key systems.

More people than ever used QQI's online services, with over 1,000 users supported. This included a 150% increase in external evaluators and assessors accessing the TrustEd and Due Diligence applications.

**Improving Performance and Efficiency**

To improve service reliability, QQI ICT increased the pace and quality of digital delivery. The ICT team released updates more frequently, now one every 1.5 days, compared with every 2.2 days previously, and expanded the range of applications supported to 41 systems overall.

Quality assurance also improved. The team introduced 141 automated tests, reducing manual testing time by 295 hours and helping ensure new updates are safe, stable, and reliable for users.

**Modernising Infrastructure and Improving Data Quality**

Work continued to modernise QQI's systems and reduce reliance on older technologies.

This included:

- initiating the migration of processes and reporting from legacy databases to a more secure Azure environment
- consolidating invoicing so all areas now use the same approach and system, improving consistency, user experience and reducing errors
- changes to QQI's IRQ service to accommodate TrustEd providers
- upgrading to the latest SharePoint platform to ensure long term support and improved security alignment with Microsoft cloud services
- enhancing the intranet to facilitate effective information sharing and efficient document management.

These changes will make QQI's systems easier to maintain, more secure, and better prepared for future enhancements.

2025 was a year of strong digital progress for QQI. QQI ICT implemented enhancements at an accelerated pace, expanded user support, enhanced cyber resilience, and updated critical systems. Collectively, these initiatives ensure QQI maintains reliable and high-quality digital services for learners, providers, and the public.

### Transform learner certification from physical to digital form

QQI has engaged in exploratory work to identify potential approaches to digital certification and verification using existing national and international platforms. Future actions will be informed by the outcomes of this exploratory work.

## Social media

In 2025, QQI prioritised audience engagement on LinkedIn, maintained a social listening presence on X, and closed its Facebook account.

### LinkedIn

Followers: 14,431

Added 1,960 (15.7% increase on 2024)

Engagement per impression

rate: 9.4% (3.4% increase on 2024)

300,719 impressions (4% decrease on 2024)

### YouTube

Subscribers: 856 (+124)

Video views: 23,642 (25% decrease on 2024)

Impressions: 114,546 (19.3% decrease on 2024)

Impressions click-through rate: 2.9%

(23.7% decrease on 2024)

### X

Followers: 5,282 (decrease of 2.3% on 2024)

Engagement: 1.8%

### The QT – QQI monthly newsletter

Subscribers: 1,240

Average open rate of 43.3%

### QQI website overview

Active users: 251,900

The QQI website was most frequently accessed by users based in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, India and Spain.



# Corporate Matters

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

## 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 2025. 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.

## Statutory Appeals

A revised statutory instrument for the appeals process was enacted on 18 November 2025. QQI developed and published related supporting documentation. A process for the recruitment of a new appeals panel was established as the existing panel had completed its term.

## Official Languages Act compliance

QQI is confident that it has fulfilled its obligations under the Official Languages Act in relation to publication and communications requirements for 2025.

Section 10A requires public bodies to make sure that:

- 20% of all advertising each year is through Irish; and
- at least 5% of annual advertising budget is spent on advertising in Irish language media.

QQI exceeded both these targets with 64.06% in terms of advertising in Irish and 6.95% of the advertising budget spent on advertising in Irish language media.

## 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 with the following targets:

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

Progress in 2025:

- optimised office space usage to reduce energy demand (e.g., consolidating space in line with blended/hybrid working)
- reduced business travel by using video/online meetings as the default where appropriate
- minimised waste through reuse and recycling offers to staff during the upgrade of the building
- provided ongoing support for the Bike to Work Scheme and the provision of facilities for cyclists
- ongoing support of the TaxSaver scheme to incentivise staff to use public transport
- achieved the Silver Smarter Travel Award in 2025 from the National Transport Authority in recognition of QQI's commitment to sustainable travel.

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 its landlord to a significant capital investment aimed at retrofitting its leased offices to a very high energy rated standard. Work, including grant applications, commenced on this project in late 2024, and it is anticipated that it will take approximately 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 to be included in its equality, diversity and inclusion plan 2025-27. QQI's 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, recognising efforts in this area.

## Finance

In 2025, QQI received €15,956\* million from State Grant, fee income, EU funding and other sources. For the same period, expenditure was €14,886\* million. Pay and pensions expenditure in 2025 amounted to €8,437\* million (excluding 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 2025.

Expenses are paid for accommodation, travel, and subsistence in line with rates set by the Department of Finance.

Total board expenses in 2025 were €8,069\*.

Remuneration and Expenses of the Chief Executive

Dr Padraig Walsh retired as Chief Executive on 31 March 2025. Ms Cliona Curley was appointed Interim Chief Executive for the period 1 April to 2 November. Dr Lynn Ramsey was appointed Chief Executive from 3 November. Their respective salaries for the role of Chief Executive totalled €183,039 as follows:

|                  |                    |                 |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Dr Padraig Walsh | 1/1/25 - 31/3/25   | €48,081         |
| Ms Cliona Curley | 1/4/25 - 2/11/25   | €106,935        |
| Dr Lynn Ramsey   | 3/11/25 - 31/12/25 | €28,023         |
| <b>Total</b>     |                    | <b>€183,039</b> |

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 role of Chief Executive incurred vouched expenses of €1,299\* in 2025.

\* These figures are extracted from the draft QQI Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025. QQI’s audited financial statements are published on the QQI website.

Risk Management

During 2025, QQI continued to manage risk in line with its Risk Management Policy of June 2022. The corporate risk register was updated and reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Executive Management

Team. It was considered and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee at each of its meetings and by the QQI Board at two of its meetings. Risk issues and developments were also considered at each meeting of both the committee and the board in 2025. This included regular updates on IT and cybersecurity. Particular attention was given to the management of the principal risks. These concerned QQI’s funding model and the unpredictability of key income streams; cybersecurity and data; craft apprenticeship programmes and awards, and records management.

Principal risks

In line with the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016), QQI confirms that, in 2025, it conducted an assessment of principal risks, including a description of these risks, where appropriate, and associated mitigation measures or strategies. QQI reviewed the principal risks identified in 2025, and their mitigations, at its meeting on 27 February 2026. These are set out in the table below.

## QQI Principal Risks 2025

| Rank | Risk description and mitigations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | <p><b>Risk to multi-annual planning and to delivering on the objectives in our Statement of Strategy due to the lack of guaranteed state funding and uncertainty about QQI's future funding model.</b></p> <p>Mitigated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• budgetary controls</li> <li>• regular reporting and review of management accounts</li> <li>• the submission of a revised funding model and reserves retention policy to Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS); continued engagement with DFHERIS on fees and charges and timely communication of significant developments in income and expenditure flows.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2    | <p><b>Risk that QQI cannot fully apply its standard validation and certification processes to craft apprenticeship programmes and that public confidence in the associated qualifications will be diminished due to the untypical nature of SOLAS as an education and training provider in addition to its role as regulator and funder, and the need to maintain the flow of qualified craft apprentices into the workforce in the interim period prior to the transfer of core responsibilities to higher education institutions.</b></p> <p>Mitigated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oversight of the follow-up by SOLAS to the focused review of Phases 4 and 6 of the craft electrical apprenticeship programme</li> <li>• provision of QQI advice and comprehensive data to support the transfer of responsibilities for curricula assessments and certification to higher education institutions</li> <li>• review of QQI's monitoring policy.</li> </ul> |
| 3    | <p><b>Risk that QQI business systems, processes and data are compromised due to a cybersecurity event or data breach</b></p> <p>Mitigated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• controls to ensure secure access to QQI resources and systems</li> <li>• extension of data loss prevention activity, new external independent security operations centre</li> <li>• regular incident review and vulnerability scanning, robust leaver and joiner policies, implementation of the action plan on cyber security resilience</li> <li>• implementation and review of disaster recovery plan, and work on disaster recovery</li> <li>• continuous review and updating of GDPR policy and RoPA.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4    | <p><b>Risk that the record management system is not implemented consistently and is ineffective due to a lack of simplified structure and sustained management support.</b></p> <p>Mitigated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation of policies on records management policy, data retention and open data policy</li> <li>• appointment of an open data officer</li> <li>• establishment of central repository of business processes and policies, phased roll-out of a new intranet.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## 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 provides against unwanted or harmful uses of data. QQI maintains oversight of its level of compliance to ensure that there are 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 2025

## Reports of Protected Disclosures 2025

No internal reports were received in 2025. Seven external reports were received in 2025. Of these, five were transmitted from other prescribed persons and the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commission. Two

reports were made directly to the CEO of QQI as the prescribed person.

Of all reports received, three were assessed as not being within the remit of QQI; one was found to have *prima facie* evidence of potential wrongdoing and the matters raised are under investigation; one did not contain *prima facie* evidence of wrongdoing and was closed; one report was a repetitive report and was closed and one report remained to be assessed.

Two reports for which investigations were opened in 2024 were carried over to 2025. One of these was closed and the matters referred to another procedure. The second report remained open at the end of 2025.

## Complaints of Service in 2025

QQI received no complaints of service in 2025.

## Internal Controls and the Control Environment

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 Comptroller and Auditor General.

## Internal Controls

There were no material breaches of internal controls in 2024.

## 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.

During 2025, the QQI Audit and Risk Committee continued to operate its oversight role in accordance with the terms of reference of the committee.

## Fraud

No instances of fraud or suspected fraud were disclosed or discovered during 2025, 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 in the achievement of aims and objectives. QQI senior management 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 Forvis Mazars to conduct an annual external independent review of the effectiveness of the system of internal controls for 2025 as required by the Code of Practice. The report was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee for consideration and approval at the 13 February 2026 meeting. It was approved to go the QQI Board for consideration at its subsequent meeting on 27 February 2026.



# Governance Structure

## The QQI Board

QQI is governed by a board of 10 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 the:

- 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 Pádraig Walsh (Chief Executive) (retired 31 March 2025)

Ms Cliona Curley (Interim Chief Executive) (1 April – 2 November 2025)

Dr Lynn Ramsey (Chief Executive) (appointed 3 November 2025)

Ms Marianne Doyle

Dr Sean Duignan (Ordinary member with international experience related to QQI's functions)

Dr Sharon Feeney

Mr Blake Hodgkinson

Mr Kevin McStravock

Ms Emma Muldoon Ryan (AMLE nomination) (from 21 September 2025)

Ms Anne Naughton

Mr Bryan O'Mahony (AMLE nomination) (to 30 June 2025)

Ms Maria Ward (Ordinary member representative of learners)

**Table 4: Record of attendance by Board Members at 2025 QQI Board Meetings**

|                    | 10 February 2025 | 3-5 March Incorporeal | 27-31 March Incorporeal | 28 April | 13 June | 9-10 July Incorporeal | 26 September | 5 December | Max | Attended |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|-----|----------|
| Irene Sheridan     | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                       | ✓        | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 8        |
| Lynn Ramsey        | N/A              | N/A                   | N/A                     | N/A      | N/A     | N/A                   | N/A          | ✓          | 1   | 1        |
| Cliona Curley      | N/A              | N/A                   | N/A                     | ✓        | ✓       | N/A                   | ✓            | N/A        | 3   | 3        |
| Padraig Walsh      | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                       | N/A      | N/A     | N/A                   | N/A          | N/A        | 3   | 3        |
| Marianne Doyle     | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                       | x        | ✓**     | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 7        |
| Sean Duignan       | ✓                | x                     | ✓                       | ✓        | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 7        |
| Sharon Feeney      | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                       | ✓**      | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 8        |
| Blake Hodgkinson   | ✓                | x                     | ✓                       | ✓        | x       | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 6        |
| Kevin McStravock   | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                       | ✓        | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 8        |
| Emma Muldoon Ryan* | N/A              | N/A                   | N/A                     | N/A      | N/A     | N/A                   | N/A          | ✓          | 1   | 1        |
| Anne Naughton      | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                       | ✓        | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓**          | ✓          | 8   | 8        |
| Bryan O'Mahony*    | ✓**              | ✓                     | ✓                       | ✓        | x       | N/A                   | N/A          | N/A        | 5   | 4        |
| Maria Ward         | ✓                | x                     | ✓                       | ✓        | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓          | 8   | 7        |

\* AMLÉ Representative, term of office runs from 1 July to 30 June each year.

\*\* attended via video conferencing.

✓ = Attended

N/A = Not a member at date of meeting

X = Did not attend

Gender Balance in QQI Board Membership

As of 31 December 2005, the board had seven (70%) female and three male members (30%). Therefore, QQI did not meet the government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

To address and improve gender balance, the QQI Board and the executive will appraise the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science of the gender balance status should any vacancies arise.

The term of the AMLÉ nominee is usually one to two years and therefore, changes more frequently than the other members of the QQI Board.

Performance Evaluation

An external review of the performance of the QQI Board and its committees was completed in 2025 with the resulting report presented to the board in the third quarter of 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 2025.

Membership and attendance

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

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Blake Hodkinson (Chair)             | 3/3 |
| Kate Cullen (non-board member)      | 2/4 |
| Pearl Cunningham (non-board member) | 3/4 |
| Marianne Doyle (board member)       | 4/4 |
| Walter Johnston (non-board member)  | 2/4 |

Blake Hodkinson’s term as Chair came to an end in November 2025 and Walter Johnston was subsequently appointed

Maria Ward, board member, was co-opted on to the Audit and Risk Committee at the December 2025 board meeting.

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 eight times during 2025.

### Membership and attendance

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Padraig Walsh (Chair)         | 2/2 |
| Cliona Curley (Interim Chair) | 5/5 |
| Lynn Ramsey (Chair)           | 1/1 |
| Andrea Durnin                 | 7/8 |
| Barbara Kelly                 | 7/8 |
| Jim Murray                    | 6/8 |
| Órla Barry                    | 7/8 |
| Marie Mattimoe                | 5/7 |
| Roisín Morris-Drennan         | 8/8 |

### 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 three times during 2025.

### Membership and attendance

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Kevin McStravock (Chair) | 3/3 |
| Sandra Campbell          | 2/2 |
| Caty Duykaerts           | 2/3 |
| Eithne Guilfoyle         | 3/3 |
| Bryan Maguire            | 3/3 |
| Jim Murray               | 1/3 |
| Anne Naughton            | 3/3 |
| Damien Owens             | 1/1 |
| Cassy Taylor             | 3/3 |

### 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 convenes only when there is a specific business need. As a result, no meetings were required in 2025.

### Membership

Sharon Feeney (Chair)  
 Billy Bennett  
 Cróna Gallagher  
 Paula Hodson  
 Karen Jones  
 Mary Kerr  
 Brendan O'Dea  
 Maria Ward

### Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC)

The ARC makes decisions and recommendations about the approval of quality assurance procedures; the TrustEd Ireland Mark (formerly the International Education Mark); delegated authority; and approves for publication the findings of quality reviews conducted by QQI.

The ARC met seven times in 2025.

### Membership and attendance

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Sean Duignan (Chair) | 7/7 |
| Elaine Boyd          | 4/7 |
| Fiona Farr           | 6/7 |
| Laura Flynn          | 6/7 |
| Carol Hanney         | 6/7 |
| Maria Hinfelaar      | 6/7 |
| Anna Murphy          | 4/7 |
| Ronan O'Loughlin     | 4/7 |
| Bryan O'Mahony       | 1/1 |
| Gerry O'Sullivan     | 6/7 |
| Tony Pettit          | 3/7 |

### 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 six times during 2025.

### Membership and attendance

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Irene Sheridan (Chair) | 6/6 |
| Sean Duignan           | 5/5 |
| Sharon Feeney          | 6/6 |
| Blake Hodgkinson       | 1/1 |



# Glossary of Acronyms

|                |                                                                                  |              |                                                                |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AIEB</b>    | All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training           | <b>EDI</b>   | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion                              |
| <b>AMLE</b>    | Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn                                                    | <b>EHEA</b>  | European Higher Education Area                                 |
| <b>AQRs</b>    | Annual Quality Reports                                                           | <b>ELD</b>   | Educational Longitudinal Database                              |
| <b>CARPE</b>   | Centre for Assessment Research, Policy and Practice in Education                 | <b>ELE</b>   | English Language Education                                     |
| <b>CAO</b>     | Central Applications Office                                                      | <b>ELM</b>   | European Learning Model                                        |
| <b>CAS</b>     | Common Awards System                                                             | <b>ENAI</b>  | European Network for Academic Integrity                        |
| <b>CEFR</b>    | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages                             | <b>ENQA</b>  | European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education |
| <b>CRADLE</b>  | Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning                           | <b>ESCO</b>  | European Skills, Competences, and Occupations                  |
| <b>CRM</b>     | Customer Relationship Management                                                 | <b>ETB</b>   | Education and Training Board                                   |
| <b>CVS</b>     | Community/Voluntary Sector                                                       | <b>FET</b>   | Further Education and Training                                 |
| <b>DABs</b>    | Designated Awarding Bodies                                                       | <b>FOI</b>   | Freedom of Information                                         |
| <b>DBS</b>     | Dublin Business School                                                           | <b>GAIN</b>  | Global Academic Integrity Network                              |
| <b>DCU</b>     | Dublin City University                                                           | <b>GDPR</b>  | General Data Protection Regulation                             |
| <b>DEQAR</b>   | Database of European Quality Assurance Results                                   | <b>GenAI</b> | Generative Artificial Intelligence                             |
| <b>DFHERIS</b> | Department of Further and Higher Education, and Research, Innovation and Science | <b>GHG</b>   | Green House Gas                                                |
| <b>ECEIA</b>   | European Conference on Ethics and Integrity in Academia                          | <b>GRC</b>   | Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications         |
|                |                                                                                  | <b>HE</b>    | Higher Education                                               |
|                |                                                                                  | <b>HEA</b>   | Higher Education Authority                                     |
|                |                                                                                  | <b>HEI</b>   | Higher Education Institution                                   |
|                |                                                                                  | <b>HELS</b>  | Higher Education Links Scheme                                  |

|        |                                                                  |       |                                                 |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------|
| IADT   | Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology            | PDA   | Performance Delivery Agreement                  |
| IAV    | Initial Access to Validation                                     | PQR   | Provider Quality Reporting                      |
| IEMAS  | IEM Application Statement                                        | PSRBs | Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies   |
| IRQ    | Irish Register of Qualifications                                 | QAA   | Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education   |
| ISSCoP | Irish Statistical System Code of Practice                        | QDMs  | Quality Dialogue Meetings                       |
| IUA    | Irish Universities Association                                   | QDR   | Qualifications Dataset Register                 |
| LAB    | Listed Awarding Body                                             | QQI   | Quality and Qualifications Ireland              |
| LAI    | Library Association of Ireland                                   | RoPA  | Records of Processing Activities                |
| LRC    | Lisbon Recognition Convention                                    | RPL   | Recognition of Prior Learning                   |
| MoU    | Memorandum of Understanding                                      | SOC   | Security Operations Centre                      |
| NAIN   | National Academic Integrity Network                              | TEQSA | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency |
| NARIC  | National Academic Recognition Information Centre                 | TUs   | Technological Universities                      |
| NCQAA  | National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation |       |                                                 |
| NFDE   | National Framework for Doctoral Education                        |       |                                                 |
| NFQ    | National Framework of Qualifications                             |       |                                                 |
| NSETS  | North South Education and Training Standards Committee           |       |                                                 |
| NStEP  | National Student Engagement Programme                            |       |                                                 |
| NYCI   | National Youth Council of Ireland                                |       |                                                 |
| NZQA   | New Zealand Qualifications Authority                             |       |                                                 |

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