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**QQI Thematic Analysis of the
Interim Quality Reports (2026)
of the Education and
Training Boards (ETBs)**

QQI INSIGHTS.



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

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FOREWORD

This thematic analysis of the 2026 Interim Quality Reports provides a sector-wide overview of quality assurance and quality enhancement activity across the sixteen Education and Training Boards. Taken together, the reports describe a period of continued development, adaptation and consolidation across further education and training.

The ETB sector has a broad remit, serving learners, communities and employers across a diverse range of further education and training settings. This diversity is an important context for understanding the range of approaches, priorities and stages of development reflected in the reports.

The analysis indicates that quality assurance activity is increasingly being considered in relation to wider organisational planning, implementation and review. It also points to variation in how different areas of activity are developing across the sector, reflecting the diversity of ETB provision and the different contexts in which quality assurance systems operate.

The report draws together recurring themes, examples of practice and issues identified by providers as part of their ongoing quality assurance and enhancement work. It is intended to support shared understanding, continued dialogue and sectoral learning, and does not seek to rank or compare individual ETBs.

I acknowledge the work undertaken by the ETBs in preparing their Interim Quality Reports. It is hoped that this analysis will serve as a useful reference point for ongoing reflection and quality enhancement across the sector.



Dr Lynn Ramsey
Chief Executive, QQI

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thematic analysis examines the Interim Quality Reports submitted by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in February 2026. The reports describe progress, developments and emerging priorities in relation to quality assurance (QA), quality enhancement and related areas of further education and training provision. The analysis identifies a number of recurring themes across the sector, including the continued development of quality assurance governance and policy frameworks, learner support and engagement, staff professional development, programme development and curriculum change, data management, public information, academic integrity, digital transformation, external engagement, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Across the reports, ETBs describe ongoing work to review and develop quality assurance arrangements, including governance structures, terms of reference, policy documentation, and mechanisms for stakeholder and learner representation. Several reports also refer to efforts to consolidate or standardise quality assurance systems, often through the development of common frameworks, manuals, portals, or documentation repositories. These developments are presented alongside continued activity in learner voice, feedback processes, learner support services, Universal Design for Learning, accessibility, and progression pathways.

The reports also indicate that ETBs are engaging with changing educational, technological and labour market contexts. Programme development, blended learning, digital platforms, academic integrity, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) are addressed in a number of reports, with activity ranging from policy development and staff guidance to curriculum innovation and assessment review. Data management and evidence-informed decision-making are also recurring themes, with ETBs describing the use of national systems, dashboards, learner feedback data, and emerging data roles to support monitoring, reporting and planning.

External engagement is presented as a feature of quality assurance and programme development across the reports, including engagement with national bodies, higher education institutions, employers, other ETBs, community organisations, and international partners. Recognition of Prior Learning is also identified as an area of active development, with reports describing policy work, pilot activity, staff capacity building, promotion, and implementation challenges.

Overall, the thematic analysis suggests that the interim reporting cycle captures a sector in which quality assurance activity is being linked to wider organisational priorities, including learner experience, staffing, digital capability, programme responsiveness, public information, and partnerships. The reports also identify areas that remain in development, including resourcing, data capacity, consistency of implementation, academic integrity in the context of AI, and the further embedding of emerging policies and procedures. The analysis is intended to support shared understanding of current activity across the ETB sector and to inform future quality assurance monitoring, enhancement and sectoral learning.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

The inaugural review by QQI of the quality assurance in the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) took place between March 2021 and May 2022. Following the review, each ETB provided an action plan and follow-up report in response to the recommendations made in the individual review report.

QQI's role is to monitor and review the QA of providers, and the effectiveness of provider's internal QA system. Systematic quality reporting by providers is an integral part of this process. For this quality reporting period, ETBs submitted an Interim Quality Report. The interim quality report records progress, developments and impacts in furtherance of recommendations arising from each ETB's review report, as well as other QA enhancements and initiatives.

This synthesis presents a thematic analysis of the 16 Interim Quality Reports submitted by ETBs in February 2026. The analysis identifies recurring themes, areas of activity, and matters identified by ETBs as remaining in development. It is intended to support a shared understanding of current quality assurance and quality enhancement activity across the ETB sector and to inform future monitoring, enhancement, and sectoral learning.

Cavan and Monaghan ETB (CMETB)
City of Dublin FET College
Cork ETB
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB)
Donegal ETB
Galway and Roscommon ETB (GRETB)
Kerry ETB
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (KCETB)
Kildare and Wicklow ETB (KWETB)
Limerick and Clare ETB (LCETB)
Louth and Meath ETB (LMETB)
Laois and Offaly ETB (LOETB)
Longford and Westmeath ETB (LWETB)
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB (MSLETB)
Tipperary ETB
Waterford and Wexford ETB (WWETB)



METHODOLOGY

The Interim Quality Report provides an update to each ETB's inaugural review follow-up report, in addition to information regarding quality plans and initiatives in the ETB. The reports include links to published quality assurance policies and procedures of the ETB. Within the report each ETB is asked to give particular attention to specific impacts arising from QA actions/initiatives, including:

- key **areas of focus prioritised for action** and any specific changes arising as well as links to any associated outputs (e.g., procedures, reports etc.)
- reflections on the Follow-up **reporting process and any barriers or challenges** arising in implementation of the review recommendations.
- additional **reflections**.
- The thematic analysis generally focuses on the following questions:
 - What are the key themes and topics addressed in the Interim Quality Reports?
 - What are the key findings presented in the Interim Quality Reports?

This analysis employed a mixed-methods approach, combining the capabilities of [MAXQDA Tailwind](#) and [Microsoft Copilot](#). MAXQDA Tailwind, an AI qualitative data analysis assistant, facilitated the initial organisation of the data. Tailwind was used to manage large textual datasets and identify recurring themes.

Using Tailwind, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify overarching themes and sub-themes. This further involved a process of reviewing the data, refining the themes, and identifying relationships between different themes.

To ensure the accuracy and clarity of the final report, Microsoft 365 Copilot was employed as a proofreading tool. Copilot was used to review the final draft for grammatical errors and stylistic inconsistencies. All suggested edits were reviewed by a QQI executive. The tool provided an efficient first layer of proofing.

SECTION 3: INTERIM QUALITY REPORT

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORKS AND GOVERNANCE

The Interim Quality Reports indicate continued development of Quality Assurance (QA) frameworks and governance arrangements within Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

Governance Structures and Representation

Across the reports, several ETBs describe the review and development of QA governance structures and efforts to broaden representation. Reports refer to strengthening and simplifying QA governance (LCETB, DDLETB, KWETB, LMETB, Tipperary ETB). This includes reviewing Terms of Reference (ToR) for councils and committees, including Quality Councils, Quality Assurance Development Groups (QADG), Programme Management Development Groups (PMDG), and Programme Approval Groups (City of Dublin FET College, Cavan and Monaghan ETB, Cork ETB, DDLETB, KWETB, Kerry ETB, Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, LMETB and Tipperary ETB).

A key aspect of broadening representation is the inclusion of external stakeholders, employers, and learners. City of Dublin FET College expanded its QADG to include two learners and plans to review the Quality Assurance Strategic Planning Council (QASPC) to include external members. LCETB enhanced external representation on its Quality Council. Donegal ETB updated its Quality Council membership to include external representatives from the industry and the community sectors. GRETB specifically addressed a recommendation for learner representation on governance groups, leading to the formation of a Learner Voice Online Forum and representation on committees. DDLETB ensures representation from all FET services on its governance and working groups. LWETB focused on employer representation and stakeholder engagement, with the Enterprise Engagement Coordinator facilitating feedback and strategic partnerships. KWETB formed a Stakeholder Engagement Subgroup to strengthen external and learner representation. Kerry ETB broadened its external engagement, including learner and external representation on its FET Quality Council and other governance groups. Tipperary ETB increased external representation on its Quality Council, including HE representation, and formally acknowledged the Student Council's role in policy input. WWETB established a Quality Strategy Group with cross-representational members from various departments and senior management.

Policy Development and Documentation

The reports describe ongoing development, review, and updating of QA policies and procedures. Several ETBs are working towards a single, unified QA framework or manual. City of Dublin FET College is transitioning to unified QA Policies and Procedures following the launch of its FET College. LCETB developed new QA policies through its Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS). CMETB is developing a Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) Strategic Architecture and Framework. Cork ETB developed a draft Blended Learning Framework and reviewed

QA Assessment Policy and Procedures. GRETB adopted and published a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and revised assessment-related policies. DDLETB focused on developing a single, standardised QA system across FET provision, completing a suite of policies intended to support consistency. LWETB is implementing a new QA system with a Quality System Index linking to policies and procedures. KWETB completed its Single Quality Assurance Framework and developed three new policies in 2025. Kerry ETB's FET Quality Assurance Manual outlines policies for public information and external parties, with reviews ongoing. KCETB reviewed its Teaching and Learning policy and developed an Employer Engagement Policy. LMETB is developing an overarching Quality Framework and has updated policies related to assessment and academic integrity. LOETB prioritised and completed several QA policies, including an Admissions Policy and RPL Policy, and is developing a QA Manual. MSLETB has its Staff QA Manual available on its website. Tipperary ETB developed a Quality Policy as an overarching framework and has a QA Roadmap. WWETB is reviewing and revising its Quality Documents for accessibility and has redeveloped its Blended Learning Policy.

Learner Voice and Engagement

Actively seeking and integrating the “learner voice” is a recurring theme. City of Dublin FET College established a Learner Support and Engagement Service (LSES) and conducts annual cross-centre learner surveys. LCETB enhanced learner voice data collection and developed a common feedback form to inform course design and delivery. CMETB uses data from end-of-module evaluations and annual learner surveys to inform QA. GRETB sought learner feedback, published this in a report, and facilitated a Learner Feedback Forum (December 2025). LWETB created its own learner forum as a pilot project, leading to a Learners' Voice Report. KWETB designed surveys for learners via Student Councils to evaluate policy effectiveness and developed a Learner Handbook. Kerry ETB emphasises learner engagement through surveys, forums, and representation on corporate governance. LMETB's Communications Sub-Committee invites participation from members of its Learner Voice Network, and Learner Voice feedback influences learner support provision. LOETB strengthens the learner voice through training with AONTAS and annual FET Learner Forums. Tipperary ETB's FET Student Council is integral to capturing the 'Learner Voice'. WWETB launched a new End of Course Learner Survey and is reviewing the effectiveness of its FET Learner Council.

Digitalisation and Data Management

Many ETBs are leveraging digital tools and data for QA. City of Dublin FET College uses MS Teams and SharePoint for documentation and launched a College Connect Learner Hub. LCETB's QA Client App supports certification planning and recording outcomes, and the ETB strengthens the use of information and data for quality. CMETB uses internal staff SharePoint sites for documentation and triangulates data from multiple sources. Cork ETB uses SharePoint as a central repository for QA. GRETB continues to develop its digital infrastructure with GRETB Connect QA SharePoint. LWETB is migrating data to OneDrive/SharePoint and uses its FET website as a staff hub. KWETB developed a QA Portal as a centralised communication hub and uses Power BI, Tableau, Programme Learner Support System (PLSS), and the SOLAS management information system (MIS) for data. LMETB monitors PLSS data, uses a Result Tracking Quality System, and plans to use

Tableau. LOETB has a FET Data and Information Management role to improve access to reliable programme data. MSLETB uses KPIs for programme development and its Data Processing Policy governs data collection. Tipperary ETB uses the SOLAS Data Analytics Unit - Tableau server and a monthly FET DATA BITES newsletter. WWETB uses a Power BI Dashboard for learner survey results and explores the use of AI for insights.

Blended Learning and Digital Transformation

The integration of blended and online learning is a noted development, often requiring new policies and applications for extended scope of provision. Cork ETB developed a draft Blended Learning Framework and submitted an application to QQI for blended learning. DDLETB developed a Blended Learning Policy and Strategy. LWETB completed a Digital Learning Policy and is developing a Blended Learning Procedure. KWETB's QA webinar for staff will focus on digital evidence guidance and ethical AI use. A number of ETBs reported on activity to extend their scope of provision to include blended, online, or fully online learning, alongside the development or updating of related blended learning policies and frameworks.

Academic Integrity and AI – Policies and Guidelines

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has prompted ETBs to develop policies and guidelines for its ethical use and to address academic integrity. CMETB is monitoring AI developments and has updated AI guidelines for educators and learners. Cork ETB developed an Academic Integrity Policy and an associated Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy. LWETB developed a Digital Learning Policy and is developing blended learning procedures. KWETB's planned QA webinar for staff will include the ethical use of AI. KCETB's Academic Integrity Committee also supports development in this area.

Academic integrity, particularly in the context of AI, is a growing concern, with City of Dublin FET College establishing a working group for academic misconduct procedures and Cork ETB developing an Academic Integrity Policy. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is also being integrated into assessment design, with Kerry ETB measuring reasonable accommodations and promoting a UDL culture, and LOETB phasing out assessment instrument specifications (AIS) in Community Training with a UDL-aligned model and developing Guidelines on the Use of AI in Assessment. LMETB devised a suite of policy, procedures, and guidance documents on Academic Integrity and the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools. Tipperary ETB launched an Academic Integrity Policy for FET. WWETB developed an Academic Integrity Framework and is developing guidance on practitioner use of AI.

Challenges and Future Directions

While progress is reported, some documents acknowledge ongoing challenges. City of Dublin FET College reflects on barriers in implementing some recommendations, particularly in terms of resources. LOETB highlights the need for more defined roles, responsibilities, and dedicated capacity within QA, particularly in policy and programme development, due to staff shortages. KWETB acknowledges challenges in integrating new communication portals with existing channels and defining role-based access. LMETB recognises the need for investment in a data team and ongoing training to improve data literacy.

Future objectives include developing frameworks for programme review, implementing Self-Evaluation, Monitoring, and Review Frameworks (Donegal ETB, Cork ETB) and strengthening continuous professional development (CPD) for staff (LOETB, Tipperary ETB). Several ETBs also note they are piloting or implementing Devolved Responsibility (DR) for programme validation (LCETB, Cork ETB, MSLETB). The development of tertiary pathways and micro-credentials is also a common future focus (LCETB, LMETB, Tipperary ETB).

LEARNER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

The thematic analysis of the Interim Quality Reports indicates a broad range of learner support and engagement initiatives across ETBs, with attention to learner perspectives, feedback mechanisms, and inclusive learning environments.

- **Learner Voice and Feedback Mechanisms** are central to all ETBs' strategies. Most reports highlight the widespread use of annual learner surveys to gather feedback. This feedback is used to inform organisational and centre-level planning, leading to enhancements in Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and "closing the loop" activities (City of Dublin FET College, LCETB). Innovations in feedback collection include CMETB's 'talking survey' for unaccredited courses, LCETB's Power BI Dashboards for data visualisation and GRETB's bi-monthly QR codes requesting feedback for specific topics. Learner representation is promoted through Student Councils or Learner Voice Groups (City of Dublin FET College, CMETB, Cork ETB, LOETB, Tipperary ETB), with learners participating in governance and programme boards (City of Dublin FET College, Donegal ETB, GRETB, Kerry ETB, Tipperary ETB). Several ETBs, such as City of Dublin FET College and CMETB, host Learner Conferences or Learner Voice Weeks to foster dialogue and leadership. Collaboration with external bodies like AONTAS for learner voice training and forums is a common practice across many ETBs, underscoring a national commitment to independent learner advocacy.
- **Learner Support Services and Frameworks** are being developed and standardised. Many ETBs have established or are in the process of establishing dedicated Learner Support Services (City of Dublin FET College, DDLETB, KCETB, LMETB, MSLETB), often aiming for a "one-stop shop" approach based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. The development and implementation of Learner Handbooks are widespread, providing information on supports, policies, and assessment requirements (LCETB, LWETB, KWETB, KCETB, LMETB, Tipperary ETB). KWETB is notably creating a plain English version for accessibility. Digital hubs and platforms, such as SharePoint sites (City of Dublin FET College) and dedicated website sections (LWETB, KCETB, LMETB, Tipperary ETB) centralise access to learner information and resources. Guidance services are a key element, with many ETBs offering specialised assistance for vulnerable learners, including migrants (LCETB), Traveller and Roma communities (Cork ETB, LWETB), and those experiencing homelessness (Cork ETB). Specific support areas include mental

health and wellbeing through counselling services (GRETb, DDLETB, LWETB, Tipperary ETB), wellbeing events (Cork ETB, LWETB), and digital wellness apps (LWETB). Literacy and language support is addressed through targeted projects (City of Dublin FET College, Cork ETB), ESOL provision (Cork ETB, LWETB, MSLETB), and language development tools (City of Dublin FET College). Digital access is enhanced via laptop loan schemes (City of Dublin FET College, LWETB, Kerry ETB, KCETB) and digital literacy training (City of Dublin FET College, LWETB).

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Accessibility** is a prominent and consistently emphasised theme in the quality reports. Most ETBs have either adopted or are in the process of adopting the ALTITUDE Charter (City of Dublin FET College, CMETB, Cork ETB, LMETB), signifying a commitment to embedding universal design across all aspects of the learning environment. This includes staff training and professional development in UDL (City of Dublin FET College, Cork ETB, DDLETB, KCETB, LOETB, Tipperary ETB), the establishment of UDL Steering Groups and Leads (City of Dublin FET College, Cork ETB), and conducting audits for universal access and sensory environments (City of Dublin FET College, Cork ETB). Efforts are also focused on developing accessible learning materials and digital tools, such as SensusAccess for file conversion (LOETB) and ReachDeck software for translation (LWETB). Reasonable accommodations are being strengthened through participation in national working groups (ETBI/AHEAD) (CMETB, DDLETB, KCETB, LMETB, WWETB) and the use of maturity models for self-review and standardisation (CMETB, DDLETB, KCETB, WWETB). Dedicated disability support pages (LCETB, LWETB) and the mainstreaming of the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) (Cork ETB, Tipperary ETB). ETBs are improving access, though challenges like non-disclosure due to perceived stigma are acknowledged. The provision of assistive technology and training on its use, aims to further support inclusive practices.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Progression** are key areas for enhancing learner mobility and access. Several ETBs have implemented or are developing RPL policies and procedures (GRETb, KCETB, LOETB, WWETB), with a focus on building staff capacity through training for RPL mentors and assessors (GRETb). Initiatives to support progression pathways to higher education are evident (Cork ETB, DDLETB), alongside efforts to provide clear guidance on admissions (LOETB). The exploration of alternative assessment methods (Kerry ETB, LOETB, WWETB) and the phasing out of traditional AIS (LOETB) aim to create more flexible, authentic, and inclusive assessments.

While progress is reported, challenges remain. City of Dublin FET College identifies retention as a concern and notes that funding gaps, including the exclusion of part-time learners from the SOLAS disability fund, affect service provision. There is an ongoing need for further standardisation of feedback processes (LOETB) and learner support frameworks (DDLETB). Resource constraints, particularly budget limitations, can impact the rollout of new initiatives such as Digital Learning Hubs (MSLETB). The reports note that ETBs are continuously working to enhance the utilisation of data for quality monitoring and improvement (LCETB, Donegal ETB, WWETB), with some exploring advanced technologies like AI for deeper insights into learner feedback.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Interim Quality Reports identify Staff Recruitment, Management, and Professional Development as recurring areas of activity across ETBs, linked to national strategies, changing educational contexts, and internal quality improvement priorities. Continuous Professional Development (CPD)/Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) is referenced across most reports, with ETBs describing programmes and opportunities supported by dedicated PL&D units or officers and platforms such as SharePoint, Moodle, and internal hubs. The content of these CPD programmes includes academic integrity and AI in education, UDL, digital skills and blended learning, and specific pedagogical approaches. Several ETBs also describe efforts to align PL&D with identified needs through surveys, quality improvement plans (QIPs), and working groups.

- **Induction processes** are being strengthened across the board, with many ETBs developing formal policies, handbooks, and e-learning modules. City of Dublin FET College notes a centralised induction programme contributing to consistency, while LCETB developed a Digital Induction handbook. CMETB has implemented induction for administration staff and is discussing expansion to FET staff. Cork ETB is launching an Induction eLearning Programme, and KWETB fully implements its Induction Framework. LOETB uses online video briefings for new FET staff.
- **Communities of Practice (CoPs)** are a widely adopted strategy for fostering collaboration, sharing expertise, and promoting peer learning. While some ETBs, like City of Dublin FET College, have shifted from CoPs to clinics during times of change, others like LCETB and Donegal ETB have expanded them, often linked to new departmental structures, blended learning, or module updates. KWETB explicitly uses CoPs to strengthen communication and facilitate sharing of effective practice.
- **Leadership Development and Mentoring** are also key areas. City of Dublin FET College is introducing a staff coaching and mentoring service and has a peer mentoring programme. Cork ETB has informal job mentoring and plans to consider a formal system after evaluating its FET Leadership Development programme. LCETB has preparatory work for a formal mentoring scheme, and KWETB assigns mentors to newly appointed staff members. LWETB initiated a Leadership and Values Alignment Programme, and Tipperary ETB rolled out LEAP Leadership¹ training for senior and middle management.
- **Addressing Recruitment Challenges and Staffing Needs** is a recurring theme. City of Dublin FET College participates in a national HR network examining recruitment and skills shortages. CMETB uses the Jobtrain site for advertising roles and notes an increase in applications. Cork ETB offers opportunities for FET educators to train as Guidance Counsellors to address national shortages. GRETB addresses skill shortages by identifying and reassigning suitable staff.

1 <https://www.leapleadership.ie/>



LMETB plans for further staffing in QAES roles, including Learner Support and Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Officers. LOETB acknowledges staff shortages in development roles as a challenge to sustaining momentum. MSLETB notes the need for national agreements to streamline HR approaches. Tipperary ETB has sanctioned Programme Development roles, and WWETB recruited a TEL Coordinator.

- **Staff Well-being** is explicitly mentioned by several ETBs. City of Dublin ETB continues the rollout of the Mental Health First Aid programme. CMETB promotes wellbeing training, offers access to Spectrum.Life² and an Employee Assistance Scheme, and provides a Personal Accident Policy. Tipperary ETB approved a Wellbeing Strategy and will establish a FET Wellbeing Working Group.
- **Erasmus+ Programmes** are widely utilised for international professional development and fostering global perspectives. LCETB, GRETB, Kerry ETB, MSLETB, and Tipperary ETB all highlight staff participation in Erasmus+ mobilities, focusing on areas like VET systems, digital innovation, AI, and climate action.
- **HR Policies and Quality Assurance Integration** are also prominent. Cork ETB developed new organisational policies related to adverse weather protocols, retirement, and unreasonable conduct. DDLETB rolled out competency-based interview training focusing on diversity and inclusion. CMETB updated Dignity at Work policies and developed an Equality and Diversity Policy. DDLETB developed a PL&D Policy aligned with the DDLETB HR department's overarching policy. LWETB has implemented MetaCompliance for online training and policy distribution and has developed an intranet for centralised information. KWETB's Professional Development Policy encourages CPD. Kerry ETB's QA Handbook outlines its policy for Staff Training and Development. KCETB acknowledges the need for a consistent, ETB-wide policy for staff appraisal and monitoring teaching and learning, but notes limitations due to national agreements.

A key challenge identified across several Interim Quality Reports is capacity and resource constraints, particularly regarding staff release for PL&D, scheduling, and uneven experience levels. LOETB notes that staff shortages in development roles pose challenges to sustaining momentum. Tipperary ETB is reorganising responsibilities to prioritise PL&D coordination in the absence of a sanctioned dedicated role.

2 <https://www.spectrum.life/>

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL, AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION

The Interim Quality Reports describe programme development, approval, and curriculum innovation across ETBs as areas shaped by national policy, industry needs, quality assurance requirements, and learner progression priorities.

Collaborative Programme Development

A pervasive theme is the reported collaboration among ETBs, SOLAS, QQI, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Many ETBs participate in national initiatives such as the Common Awards System (CAS) module update process. City of Dublin FET College, for instance, engaged with the ETB sector, SOLAS, and QQI to co-create programme development and validation processes, including templates and sharing agreements, and partnered with KWETB to update Communications modules. Similarly, LCETB participated in the national CAS module update process for Levels 4, 5, and 6. Tipperary ETB contributed to the revision of two modules within the ETBI-led Module Review and Update Project.

Devolved Responsibility Pilot

A number of ETBs note that they are either participating in or preparing for the QQI Devolved Responsibility (DR) pilot, aiming to streamline and quicken programme validation timelines. This involves developing internal QA procedures and formal agreements with QQI, as seen with LCETB completing QA Procedures for DR and a Memorandum of Agreement, and Cork ETB developing a new internal policy and procedure for DR.

Curriculum Innovation and Emerging Technologies

Curriculum innovation is a central focus, particularly in integrating new topics and technologies.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** There is widespread adoption and development of AI-related programmes and staff training. CMETB developed “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (Level 4)” and “Enhancing Productivity with Artificial Intelligence (Level 5)”. City of Dublin FET College delivered organisation-wide professional learning on AI and is involved in the Generative AI for VET Educators (GenAI4VET) Erasmus+. DDLETB developed a Level 6 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategic Planning and Legal Review special purpose award (SPA), and Tipperary ETB leads the Micro-Qualification in Artificial Intelligence project, specifically “Enhancing Productivity Using AI”. WWETB’s Authentic Assessment Project aims to address the ethical use of generative AI.
- **Sustainability and Green Skills:** ETBs are developing programmes in sustainability and green skills. CMETB is a partner in the Green Skills Accelerator Programme (GRASP) and led the rollout of the QQI Level 5 Special Purpose Award in Sustainable Supply Chain Procurement. LMETB is developing awards like Sustainability Leadership and Corporate Sustainability Reporting, and its Programme Development Officer is a member of the SOLAS Green Skills Development Committee. Cork ETB integrates the QQI Level 4 Environmental

Sustainability Awareness award with practical projects.

- **Micro-credentials and Special Purpose Awards (SPAs):** The development and validation of micro-qualifications and SPAs are prevalent across Interim Quality Reports, reflecting a demand for flexible, industry-focused learning. CMETB, DDLETB, LMETB, MSLETB, and Tipperary ETB all highlight numerous SPAs and micro-credentials developed in areas ranging from Immersive Technology to Mentorship Practice and Digital Citizenship.

Tertiary Pathways and Higher Education Progression

Strengthening progression pathways to Higher Education (HE) through tertiary programmes is a key strategic objective. City of Dublin FET College has several Tertiary Degrees in development with tertiary institutions and offered degrees in partnership with TU Dublin, the National College of Ireland (NCI) and the Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT) in 2025. LCETB has progressed three Tertiary Degree programmes with Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) Midwest. DDLETB launched its first Tertiary Programme, a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Politics, Society and Media, co-designed and co-delivered with TU Dublin and City of Dublin FET College. KWETB has co-authored the 'Tertiary BA in Immersive Media Production' and is piloting the 'Tertiary BA in Primary Teaching'. Kerry ETB continues to design and deliver tertiary degree programmes, including in Nursing, Animation, Business, and Occupational Therapy. LMETB is developing structured progression pathways, including a unique access route for FET learners into the BSc (Hons) in Intellectual Disability Nursing at Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Quality Assurance and Governance Frameworks

ETBs are refining their Quality Assurance (QA) policies, procedures, and governance structures to ensure academic quality and compliance. Cork ETB's Programme Approval Group (PAG) plays a central governance role. LCETB introduced eight new FET Departments to provide a single, coherent structure for the College of FET, supporting strategic review and reducing duplication of effort.

Staff Professional Development and Capacity Building

City of Dublin FET College provided organisation-wide professional learning on AI, Academic Integrity, and Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs). LCETB initiated a programme of staff PL&D with associated communities of practice to support the transition to updated CAS modules. KWETB plans a themed QA webinar for FET staff focusing on assessment, teaching, learning, and ethical AI. LMETB established Communities of Practice (CoPs) for each of the 27 revised CAS modules to share practices and learnings. While progress is noted, LOETB acknowledges that programme development is heavily reliant on a small number of QA staff, highlighting the need for more formalised structures and dedicated. Tipperary ETB has enhanced capacity with two Programme Development roles.

The Interim Quality Reports indicate continued activity across ETBs in adapting educational provision, developing partnerships, and supporting quality assurance in response to learner needs, industry developments, and national policy priorities.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

The examples of data management and evidence-based decision-making across the Interim Quality Reports indicates a shared focus on using data for monitoring, evaluation, and strategic planning within the ETB FET sector. A common foundation across ETBs is the use of national systems such as the Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) for core data input and management. These systems are frequently complemented by data visualisation tools such as Tableau and Power BI, which are used for interpreting data, generating reports, and supporting decision-making. The QQI Business System (QBS) is also used for certification data, often triangulated with PLSS data to support accuracy and compliance.

Emphasis on Learner Voice and Feedback

A significant and consistent theme across the reports is the systematic collection and utilisation of learner feedback to inform quality enhancement and decision-making. Most ETBs conduct annual learner surveys, with high response rates often reported. These surveys are crucial for identifying satisfaction levels, areas for development, and informing Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs). Beyond surveys, methods like focus groups, dedicated Learner SharePoint, and “You Said this We did This” initiatives are employed to ensure feedback leads to tangible actions. While many ETBs collect feedback at local centre levels, some ETBs, like KWETB and Tipperary ETB, acknowledge the need for more centralised processes to analyse and act on this feedback at the ETB level. WWETB highlights a sophisticated online End of Course Learner Survey, designed for accessibility and data collection, with plans to use AI for deeper analysis.

Data Management Structures and Roles

There is a clear trend towards establishing specialised roles and teams to manage and analyse data. City of Dublin FET College and Donegal ETB have dedicated data and strategy teams or Data Management Officers. DDLETB has a Data Support Officer, and LMETB and LOETB have recognised the critical need for and, in some cases, appointed PLSS Coordinators/Data Analytics Officers to improve data accuracy, retention, and internal data literacy. This indicates a growing recognition of the complexity and importance of data management expertise.

Data Quality, Accuracy, and Integration

Ensuring data quality and accuracy is a paramount concern. Cork ETB provides detailed examples of auditing processes that have reduced data quality issues, such as missing mandatory data fields and unrecorded completed programmes. CMETB emphasises triangulating data from PLSS and QBS to ensure “clean” non-compliance reports. Many ETBs have developed standard operating procedures, naming conventions, and training for staff on data input. The integration of diverse datasets, including external sources like CSO, Pobal, and labour market insights, is increasingly common to provide a holistic view for strategic planning. KCETB has focused on strengthening systems safeguarding data integrity and developing standardised processes.

Strategic Oversight and Performance Monitoring

All Interim Quality Reports highlight the use of data for strategic oversight, particularly through monitoring against SOLAS Strategic Performance Agreements (SPAs) and internal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Monthly reports and dashboards are routinely used to track progress and inform management. LWETB details a suite of internal operational reports derived from PLSS data to ensure data accuracy and completeness, supporting targeted interventions.

Emerging Technologies and Future Directions

Several ETBs are exploring or implementing advanced technologies. CMETB, Kerry ETB, and WWETB are actively investigating the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for data analysis, identifying trends, and informing policy. LCETB has developed a QA Client App to digitalise certification processes, providing a near real-time overview. Cork ETB stands out with its advanced data-lake architecture and geographical modelling, integrating mapping data with learner and venue records for sophisticated service provision analysis. The development of a “Result Tracking Quality System” in LMETB is an example of the use of data for early identification of learner risks and timely academic interventions.

Policy and Governance Frameworks

The importance of robust policy and governance frameworks for data management and evidence-based decision-making is emphasised in the quality reports. Many ETBs are developing or refining policies related to data protection, records retention, and data analytics. The embedding of structured data reporting within key governance structures, such as Certification Approval Boards and Quality Councils, is seen as crucial for strengthening the link between evidence, oversight, and quality improvement. Tipperary ETB is finalising a new Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework to provide a stronger foundation for data implementation and oversight.

While all ETBs share a common goal of using data for quality enhancement and strategic planning, they exhibit varying levels of maturity and sophistication in their approaches. There is a collective effort to improve data quality, integrate diverse data sources, and leverage technology for deeper insights, with a strong and consistent focus on incorporating learner feedback. The ongoing development of dedicated data roles, robust policies, and the exploration of emerging technologies like AI underscore a sector-wide commitment to evidence-based decision-making.

PUBLIC INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, AND BRANDING

Rebranding and Unified Identity

A prominent theme across several ETBs is the strategic rebranding of their Further Education and Training (FET) services to establish a unified and coherent organisational identity. City of Dublin ETB and DDLETB are actively rebranding their FET provision as “City of Dublin FET College” and “Dublin College” respectively, aiming for clearer communication and stronger learner pathways. Similarly, LWETB has rebranded as the College of Further Education and Training (FET), and KCETB is developing dedicated FET campus branding. MSLETB has appointed a branding company to align its brand with its three colleges, and KWETB notes that advancing the FET College of the Future will be led by a branding strategy. This rebranding often involves renaming centres and integrating the new identity across all platforms, as seen with City of Dublin FET College.

Digital Platforms and Website Enhancement

The development, launch, or enhancement of accessible and user-friendly websites was evident across a number of ETBs. City of Dublin FET College launched a new website, with further updates planned. LWETB launched its FET website (www.lwetbfet.ie) in Q3 2025, designed for potential learners, staff, and external stakeholders, and is search engine optimised (SEO). LOETB launched a new website with improved navigation and accessibility. Tipperary ETB redesigned and migrated content to a new accessible website following a brand redevelopment. LCETB enhanced its College of FET Quality Assurance webpage and launched a dedicated Disability Supports page. DDLETB has developed a new Dublin College website (<https://mydublincollege.ie/>), with a QA site slated for completion in early 2026. ETB websites frequently include dedicated sections for learner supports, policies, news, and events.

Centralisation of Communication

Many ETBs are centralising communication efforts and establishing dedicated teams or roles. City of Dublin FET College has a “Hub and Spoke Communication team” and centralised course promotion. GRETB transitioned its Communications Team to the Corporate Services Directorate for strategic alignment and provides communications training sessions. LWETB identified a Communications Officer in 2023, supported by additional staff, and developed a three-year communications plan and a communications toolkit. DDLETB has identified a Communications Officer to manage social media and gather testimonials. MSLETB is actively growing its communications team. Internal communication is also being centralised through platforms like SharePoint sites, staff hubs, and MS Teams.

Accessibility and Plain English

A shared commitment to accessibility and clarity in communication is evident across the quality reports. City of Dublin FET College provides staff training in ‘Plain English’ and aims to update its QA section for improved accessibility. CMETB provided Accessibility and Plain English training and achieved a high accessibility score (84.3%) in the National



Disability Authority's monitoring report. Tipperary ETB also had staff attend National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) Plain English webinars to enhance end-user accessibility. WWETB is collaborating with its Communications and Marketing Officer to ensure public QA documents are accessible and is reviewing templates for compliance with its Digital Accessibility Plan.

Promotion

ETBs employ various strategies to engage stakeholders and promote their services. Social media is widely used for engagement and growth, with CMETB reporting significant increases in followers across LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. City of Dublin FET College participated in Higher Options and WorldSkills Ireland 2025. LOETB increased its presence at high-profile public events like the National Ploughing Championships and WorldSkills, and developed Transition Year programmes. GRETB promoted FET through national media, including RTÉ's 'Nationwide' and a TG4 documentary. Employer engagement is also a priority, with CMETB having an award-winning Employer Portal and planning further events, and GRETB presenting its provision at a BPW³ event.

Transparency of Quality Assurance Information

Improving the transparency and accessibility of Quality Assurance (QA) information is a common objective evident across the quality reports. LCETB enhanced its College of FET Quality Assurance webpage to include Quality Council meeting agendas and minutes, policies, procedures, and Learner Voice Survey reports. City of Dublin FET College is updating the QA section of its websites. DDLETB is creating an accessible QA site within its new Dublin College website. Kerry ETB publishes a QA E-Zine called "Quality News" and ensures only sufficient and accurate content is made publicly available. LMETB ensures updated links to published QA policies and procedures and issues an annual FET QAES Newsletter. WWETB is developing a system for annual consultation with learners through an online EOC Learner Survey and is ensuring the accessibility of public QA documents.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The Interim Quality Reports indicate a sector-wide focus on academic integrity and assessment practices, particularly in response to developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and the need for consistent, fair, and authentic assessment approaches.

Policy and Procedure Development and Standardisation

A primary commonality is the review, update, and development of policies and procedures related to academic integrity and assessment. City of Dublin FET College, for instance, has updated its assessment processes, introduced academic integrity policies, and established procedures for academic misconduct. Similarly, CMETB has developed or reviewed a number of policies, including those for Blended Learning, RPL, Academic Integrity and Assessment Malpractice, and various appeals processes. Donegal ETB introduced a “Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners Policy” to standardise assessment across all FET programmes, while GRETB revised and updated all policies related to the “Fair & Consistent Assessment of Learners”. DDLETB focused on establishing a single, standardised QA system, developing a suite of policies including Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy and Assessment Procedures. LMETB has also undertaken revisions to assessment-related policies, including appeals, deadlines, repeats, RPL, and secure storage. LOETB has developed and approved a Repeat Assessment Policy, a Compassionate Consideration Policy, and AI guidelines. Kerry ETB and WWETB have also developed and rolled out Academic Integrity Policies.

Addressing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Assessment

The impact of AI on academic integrity is a central and recurring theme across almost all Interim Quality Reports. Many ETBs are actively developing specific policies and guidelines for AI usage. City of Dublin FET College provided training for staff on the ethical use of AI in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and resources for learners on referencing generative AI. LCETB’s external authentication (EA) briefing sessions include thematic focus areas on AI guidance. CMETB launched a learner Academic Integrity module specifically addressing the prohibited use of AI platforms and is monitoring AI developments, with updated AI guidelines for educators and learners awaiting approval. Cork ETB developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy, and LWETB developed an “Academic Integrity Course for educators” that includes the role of AI. KWETB developed a policy on “The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)”. Kerry ETB established an institution-wide AI Working Group to develop guidance and policy for staff and is conducting a literature review on AI. KCETB’s updated assessment policy includes guidance on AI. LMETB has devised a suite of policy and guidance documents on “Academic Integrity and the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools,” including specific guidelines for learning practitioners and learners, and has implemented the Turnitin Artificial Intelligence (AI) Checker. LOETB’s AI guidelines outline appropriate, ethical, and transparent use of generative AI tools. WWETB is developing guidance videos using generative AI tools and is reviewing AIs to provide clarity on the permitted use of generative AI. This widespread focus highlights the urgency and complexity of integrating AI ethically into assessment.

Shift Towards Locally Devised Assessments

Several Interim Quality Reports indicate a move away from standardised AISs towards more authentic and locally devised assessments (LDAs). KWETB is transitioning second providers from AISs to LDAs, exemplified by their support for KARE⁴ in designing LDAs. LOETB has a two-year project to phase out AISs in Community Training, replacing them with locally devised assessments developed by programme delivery staff with QA support, emphasising Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Tipperary ETB also identifies moving to a locally (learning practitioner) devised assessment writing process as its preferred route for AIS management. WWETB's "Authentic Assessment Project" aims to redevelop commonly run modules to maximise the authenticity of the assessment process, ensuring "Learner Voice" and adapting to ethical AI use. This shift aims to make assessments more relevant, flexible, accessible, and aligned with individual learner profiles and real-world application of skills.

Internal Verification (IV) and External Authentication (EA)

The roles of IV and EA are consistently highlighted in the reports as critical components of quality assurance in assessment. City of Dublin FET College developed IV procedures and checklists and focused on early EA appointment. LCETB uses EA briefing sessions for structured feedback and incorporates findings from Results Approval Panels (RAPs) to inform staff briefings. DDLETB's development of new Dublin College Assessment Procedures highlighted the need to review and update IV, EA, and RAP. KWETB's assessment quality is complemented by its EA process, with EAs reviewing new policies for alignment with best practice. LOETB has mechanisms for providing feedback to RAPs, with teachers submitting queries to EAs. MSLETB discusses and shares recommendations from EA reports across centres. These mechanisms enhance external validation and internal consistency of assessment practice.

Learner-Centric Approaches and Engagement

Several reports emphasise learner involvement and support. CMETB launched a learner Academic Integrity module, designed by learners for learners, to support their transition to FET and ensure understanding of ethical academic practices. Kerry ETB conducted consultations with student forums for a review of the Assessment Malpractice Procedure. LMETB's new Academic Integrity Policy includes a "Learner Declaration Statement of the Use of Gen AI Tools in Assessment". WWETB's "Authentic Assessment Project" aims to ensure "Learner Voice" in. DDLETB's "Procedures for Providing Feedback to Learners" established a unified, research-informed standard for learner feedback, underpinned by principles of timeliness, constructiveness, clarity, and learner-centredness. This focus indicates a move towards empowering learners and ensuring their understanding and participation in maintaining academic integrity.

Digital Transformation and Tools

The integration of digital tools and platforms is another common thread. LCETB extended the QA Client App's functionality and transitioned from Teams to Moodle,

4 <https://www.kare.ie/>

with a templated course design approach. DDLETB piloted “Safe Exam Browser” for secure online exams. LMETB implemented the Turnitin Artificial Intelligence (AI) Checker. MSLETB’s Erasmus+ programme focuses on digital literacy and AI integration, enhancing learner engagement and administrative efficiency. These digital advancements aim to streamline processes, enhance security, and improve the overall learning and assessment experience.

Challenges

While progress is evident, challenges remain. City of Dublin FET College faced challenges integrating MIMLOs into existing awards and upskilling staff. KWETB noted the significant resources needed for the LDA transition process and the absence of a national Peer Evaluation or Cross Moderation process. Kerry ETB is mindful of the increased risk of misuse and data loss with Generative AI. WWETB’s “Authentic Assessment Project” is a direct response to concerns about learner use of Generative AI at assessment time. Future plans include further policy reviews, continued staff development, and ongoing adaptation to technological advancements, particularly in AI.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND BLENDED LEARNING

- **Blended Learning Policy and Framework Development** is a central theme across nearly all Interim Quality Reports, indicating a widespread shift towards integrating blended and online learning. As noted earlier, during the period of reporting many ETBs were actively developing, reviewing, and submitting applications to QQI for an extension of their scope of provision to include blended learning. This often involved the creation of dedicated Blended Learning Policies and Strategies, sometimes as part of a broader framework.
- **Digital Platforms for QA Documentation and Staff Resources** are utilised and being further developed across the ETBs. SharePoint emerges as a dominant platform for centralising QA policies, procedures, guidelines, and other resources. City of Dublin FET College, for example, has dedicated MS Teams and SharePoint sites for governance and working groups, and CMETB promotes the use of its internal staff SharePoint sites, including a dedicated QAES SharePoint. GRET Connect QA SharePoint was streamlined for easier navigation, and Cork ETB uses SharePoint as a central repository for QA documentation. KWETB developed a QA Portal on the SharePoint/Teams platform. LMETB uses a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for sharing updated modules and resources. Moodle is also widely adopted as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and for resource sharing. LCETB transitioned from Teams to Moodle with a phased action plan and introduced a Moodle Style Guide. City of Dublin FET College maintains both Moodle and Microsoft 365 and plans to move to a single VLE. LOETB launched a new website with a password-protected staff section and is progressing a SharePoint-based internal communication hub. Tipperary ETB updated its Staff Hub as an internal Information & Communication repository.
- **Digital Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** are significant priorities, with ETBs implementing various tools and strategies to ensure inclusive

access. City of Dublin ETB adopted ALTITUDE, the National Charter for Universal Design, and established a UD/ALTITUDE steering committee. CMETB achieved a high accessibility score in the National Disability Authority's monitoring report, reflecting investment in accessible design and staff training. Cork ETB integrated the Brickfield Accessibility+ Toolkit into Moodle LMS and provides staff training on accessibility tools. GRETB secured the Brickfield accessibility plug-in for Moodle and provides accessibility training. LOETB implemented SensusAccess for file conversion into accessible formats and rolled out the Brickfield Accessibility Toolkit within Moodle. LWETB's new FET website includes an Accessibility Statement and ReachDeck software for translation, and the Learning Zone showcases assistive technologies. LCETB is developing a College of FET Assistive Technology Policy. WWETB is working to ensure public QA documents are accessible and reviewing other documentation for compliance with its Digital Accessibility Plan. KCETB emphasises UDL in staff capability development.

- **Staff Professional Development and Support** are consistently highlighted as crucial for successful digital transformation and blended learning implementation. Many ETBs offer CPD programmes, training, and dedicated support structures. City of Dublin FET College emphasises ongoing investment in staff engagement and CPD for implementation of digital platforms and rolled out training on AI, Academic Integrity, and UDL. LCETB offers a Credential in Design for Blended and Fully Online Learning, with many staff completing badges, and provides Communities of Practice (CoPs) and a Resource Library. Cork ETB's TEL Support Service offers training on LMS, instructional design, and digital literacies. GRETB established a TEL HUB for digital skills training and offers one-to-one TEL support. DDLETB developed a self-paced asynchronous Moodle course for Safe Exam Browser training and purchased LinkedIn Learning licenses for all staff. LWETB offers an online course "Teaching online in FET" and TEL courses and webinars. LOETB provides training on UDL principles and accessible content creation and has evolved its QASS into a multi-modal staff briefing and support model. MSLETB's Erasmus+ programme includes staff development focused on innovative pedagogy and digital capacity building. WWETB is planning for dedicated TEL support, including gap analysis surveying and TEL-themed support videos. KCETB emphasises mandatory induction for blended delivery and ongoing professional development.
- **Information and Data Management** is another key area, with ETBs leveraging digital tools for data analysis, reporting, and decision-making. City of Dublin FET College utilises Tableau for data interpretation and recruited a data team to support decision-making. CMETB uses Tableau and PowerBI for data analysis and reporting, triangulating qualitative and quantitative data from PLSS and QBS. GRETB is addressing staff shortages in IT and ensuring data management systems meet GDPR guidelines. LWETB is migrating data to structured SharePoint sites and implemented a Barracuda⁵ backup solution. WWETB's new End of Course Learner Survey uses Power BI for data compilation and visualisation.

5 <https://www.barracuda.com/products/data-protection/backup>

- **Learner-Centred Approaches and Engagement** are evident in the development of digital resources and platforms aimed at supporting learners. City of Dublin FET College launched the College Connect Learner Hub, a SharePoint site for learners, and City of Dublin FET College Connect serves as a central hub for student supports. LCETB prioritises learner voice and learner-centred design, using feedback to improve the Learner Zone and Moodle induction resources. LWETB created a dedicated Learner Support section on its FET website to address fragmented information for learners with disabilities. LOETB established a dedicated Learner Information tile on Moodle. Tipperary ETB designed a new accessible website with a dedicated FET Student Hub. KWETB's Learner Handbook is available in digital format on its new QA Portal and website. KCETB's FET Learner Handbook provides consistent messaging to learners.

While most reports focus on the positive aspects and implementation of digital transformation, some acknowledge challenges and risks. GRETB highlights challenges with staff resourcing in the IT department, impacting service delivery and management of emerging technologies. LWETB notes a gap in understanding regarding data migration, with many users moving data to OneDrive instead of SharePoint, indicating a need for further training. Kerry ETB acknowledges that advancing technology presents both opportunities and threats, with integrity being a key focus due to the increased risk of misuse and data loss from Generative AI. Budget constraints are mentioned by MSLETB as a reason for Digital Learning Hubs and other initiatives being on hold. KCETB implemented interim protections like on-site examinations pending compliant remote-proctoring solutions.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

External engagement and partnerships are identified across the reports as relevant to quality assurance, programme development, strategic alignment, and learner progression.

Engagement with National Bodies

A primary area of collaboration involves national bodies such as QQI, SOLAS, and ETBI. ETBs reported on cooperation with QQI for quality assurance monitoring, programme validation, and the Devolved Responsibility (DR) pilot, which allows ETBs to manage evaluations as part of the programme validation process. SOLAS is a frequent partner for funding, strategic performance agreements, data management (PLSS), and skills needs. Several ETBs, including City of Dublin FET College, Donegal ETB and KWETB participate in national PLSS working groups. ETBI facilitates national collaborations, communications, and working groups, such as the national module update process.

Tertiary Pathways and Higher Education Partnerships

A strong and consistent theme is the development of tertiary pathways and degrees in partnership with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This is a key focus for nearly all ETBs, aiming to strengthen progression routes for learners. City of Dublin FET College

is developing tertiary degrees with TU Dublin, NCI, IADT, TCD, and UCD, including a BA (Honours) in Politics, Society and Media with TU Dublin. LCETB partners with Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) Midwest, while CMETB collaborates with the National Tertiary Office (NTO) and Atlantic Technological University (ATU) for a Social Care degree and DkIT for Intellectual Disability Nursing. Cork ETB offers BSc programmes with UCC and MTU. DDLETB launched its first tertiary programme, a BA (Honours) in Politics, Society and Media, co-designed with TU Dublin and City of Dublin FET College, and is exploring further collaborations with UCD, TCD, IADT, and Marino Institute of Education. LWETB has an MoU with TUS and collaborates with LCETB and Tipperary FET on a Mental Health Nursing degree. KWETB co-authored a 'Tertiary BA in Immersive Media Production' with IADT and CDETB. Kerry ETB developed tertiary programmes in Nursing, Animation, Business, and Occupational Therapy with the NTO. KCETB has developed and delivered four Tertiary Degrees with SETU. LMETB collaborates with the NTO and has unique access routes with DkIT and UCD. MSLETB continues tertiary degrees with ATU, GRETB, and Donegal ETB. Tipperary ETB is the Coordinating Provider for the Certificate in Pathway to Primary Teaching Level 5, collaborating with five other ETBs and HE institutions. WWETB launched a new Tertiary Intellectual Disability Nursing 1+4 degree with Waterford College of Further Education and SETU, and a Bachelor of Business Studies with Dungarvan College and SETU.

Industry and Employer Engagement

All reports emphasise engagement with industry and employers for skills needs analysis, programme development, work placements, and feedback. City of Dublin FET College uses a customer relationship management (CRM) system (Seed Database) to enhance engagement and established a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) working group. LCETB plans a targeted Employer and Industry Partner Survey. CMETB developed traineeships (e.g., Floor and Wall Tiling) and micro-qualifications with industry partners and utilises an Employer Portal. Cork ETB established an Enterprise and Employer Engagement Committee and supports local business networks. LWETB reported on its structured, model for enterprise engagement, exceeding its Skills to Advance targets and collaborating with numerous regional business groups. KCETB developed an ETB-wide Employer Engagement Framework and policy to standardise practices. LMETB, MSLETB and Tipperary ETB also utilise the Strategic Employer Engagement Database (SEED) CRM system to manage employer relationships and track engagement.

Collaboration with Other ETBs

Collaboration among ETBs is widespread for programme development, module updates, shared learning, and national initiatives. City of Dublin FET College partnered with KWETB to update Communications module descriptors. LCETB is an active member of the national CAS module update process. CMETB collaborates with Donegal ETB on Work Experience module reviews and established a national ESOL Programme Board with other ETBs. Cork ETB collaborates with LCETB on the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship. GRETB collaborates with LCETB for the Hairdressing Apprenticeship and Kerry ETB for the Commis Chef apprenticeship. DDLETB collaborated with all 16 ETBs in the national module update process. LWETB worked with MSLETB on National Module Updates. KWETB shared its newly developed micro-qualifications with other ETBs. Tipperary ETB collaborated with Kerry ETB on the Module Update Project.



International Engagement (Erasmus+)

Many ETBs actively participate in Erasmus+ programmes for staff mobility, learner placements, and international project partnerships. City of Dublin FET has an International Desk, participates in KA2 and KA3 partnerships, and projects like GenAI4VET. LCETB expanded its Erasmus+ Staff Mobility Programme and completed a KA2 partnership. Cork ETB had 32 staff mobilities and hosted international study visits. GRETB holds two Erasmus+ accreditations and has seen growth in VET funding. Kerry ETB prepared an accreditation application for its VET section and had 23 FET staff mobilities. MSLETB views Erasmus+ as a strategic vehicle for organisational growth, implementing mobilities for over 100 staff and apprentices. Tipperary ETB was awarded a significant grant for Erasmus+ Staff mobility and achieved Organisational Accreditation.

Community and Local Agency Engagement

Engagement with local community groups, NGOs, and government agencies is a common feature across ETBs. City of Dublin FET College collaborates with the National Learning Network (NLN) and hosted a conference with external expertise from the University of Edinburgh. LCETB works with regional and local government authorities. Cork ETB partners with the Traveller Visibility Group, Southern Traveller Health Network, Cork Simon, The Recovery Academy, and Esports Ireland. DDLETB works with five chambers of commerce, the Dublin Regional Skills Forum, and County Councils. LWETB reported on its strong working relationships with Local Area Integration Teams (LAIT), agencies supporting people with disabilities, and Intreo⁶.

Innovations

Several ETBs demonstrate innovative approaches. CMETB is involved in cross-border initiatives with third-level institutes in the North through the PEACEPLUS programme. DDLETB undertook a significant rebranding to “Dublin College” to unify its FET services and led the PATH FET to HE Collaboration Project to address transition barriers for FET learners. KCETB notably piloted and developed a certified Thatching programme in partnership with the Heritage Council to address a niche skills gap. LMETB is developing a Special Purpose Award in Factory of the Future/Smart Factory processes with an industry partner. Tipperary ETB leads a Micro-Qualification in Artificial Intelligence (AI) project. WWETB is re-examining a collaborative data analysis project for FE-HE progression with SETU and uses the Reasonable Accommodation for Learners Maturity Model.

6 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/campaigns/intreo-the-irish-public-employment-service/>

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

The Interim Quality Reports indicate active engagement with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) across ETBs, with attention to development, implementation, and promotion. A common pattern is the development and publication of RPL policies and procedures, with several ETBs either having published their policies recently or planning to do so. GRETB and KCETB adopted and published their RPL policies in 2025, while Kerry ETB revised and published its procedure in 2025. City of Dublin FET College anticipates publishing its procedure in 2026/27, and LOETB has developed and approved its policy for phased implementation. LMETB also reviewed and amended its policy in Q1 2026, particularly concerning Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL). DDLETB is recommended to develop an organisation-wide RPL policy.

Another significant commonality is the piloting of RPL procedures and projects to test frameworks, build capacity, and gather insights. City of Dublin FET College conducted a pilot in September 2025 for learners on full awards and those in employment. CMETB plans initial staff pilot projects for early 2026 before a wider public rollout. GRETB designed training and a pilot project for staff acting as RPL Mentors and Assessors, with participants gaining hands-on experience and contributing to resource development. DDLETB has an active pilot programme involving an EA mentoring an RPL applicant. MSLETB successfully piloted RPL in specific programmes but faced budget constraints for wider rollout. WWETB is piloting a mapped RPL process for Sports & Leisure Modules in the current year.

Staff training and capacity building are consistently highlighted as crucial for successful RPL implementation. LCETB continued internal staff professional learning and development in RPL mentoring and assessment. CMETB recruited and provided induction training for an initial panel of RPL Mentors in October 2025. GRETB held RPL Information Sessions for management and staff and designed specific training for RPL Mentor and Assessor roles, seeking expressions of interest for further training in February 2026. LOETB includes RPL processes in its annual in-person briefings and on-demand video library for FET staff. The importance of RPL Mentors and Assessors is explicitly stated by GRETB, noting that applications cannot be processed without these roles.

The scope and application of RPL vary, but generally include access, exemptions, and module accreditation. Kerry ETB explicitly details three categories: Access (entry/advanced entry), Exemptions (for modules where prior certified learning meets learning outcomes), and Accreditation for Individual Modules (for non-formal/informal learning up to 30 credits for Level 5/6 or 15 credits for Level 4). City of Dublin FET College piloted RPL for prior experience against one or two CAS modules as part of a full award and for mapping prior experience against QQI validated programmes. LOETB supports learners demonstrating prior certified and non-certified learning for exemptions or advanced entry. LMETB introduced an amendment stating that RPEL cannot be used to achieve any full award and may not be offered in highly regulated industries.

Promotional activities and awareness campaigns are also a recurring theme. LCETB conducted a coordinated public information and engagement campaign, including optimising their RPL landing page, developing guides, and organising webinars. CMETB is exploring standalone RPL branding and has developed an RPL animation as a promotional tool, planning a wider public rollout and promotional campaign later in 2026. KCETB continues to promote RPL and has an easy-to-follow leaflet available. LCETB also engaged in external presentations on RPL at national and international levels.

A key difference lies in the level of detail provided regarding the RPL process. Kerry ETB offers a step-by-step outline of its RPEL process, from initial assessment to appeal rights, including specific evidence requirements and assessment techniques. LMETB also details amendments to its RPEL policy, including extended evidence requirements (CPD programmes, employer references, professional organisation membership) and acceptable assessment techniques (examination, assignment, interviews, observations). Other reports, while mentioning pilots and procedures, do not delve into this level of operational detail.

Challenges and resource implications are acknowledged. LOETB notes that the RPL process is labour-intensive, requiring significant staff time and that expanding offerings will require additional resourcing and dedicated personnel. DDLETB recognises that dedicated resourcing will be crucial for administration and coordination. MSLETB faced budget constraints that hindered the wider rollout of RPL. GRETB highlights that the availability of an RPL Service is subject to resource availability.

The Interim Quality Reports also show inter-organisational collaboration and networking. GRETB staff are part of the ETBI RPL Network, and LMETB has members in the sectoral FET National RPL Network and Practitioner Network. LCETB presented on RPL at an international workshop and to other ETBs and HEIs. KCETB presented to an international contingent in conjunction with QQI.

CONCLUSIONS

The Interim Quality Reports provide an overview of quality assurance and quality enhancement activity across the 16 Education and Training Boards during the reporting period. Taken together, the reports indicate continued development of quality assurance governance, policy frameworks, learner engagement mechanisms, programme development processes, digital systems, data-informed approaches, and external partnerships. The reports also show that ETBs are responding to a changing further education and training context, including developments in Artificial Intelligence, blended learning, tertiary pathways, RPL, and learner support.

A recurring feature across the reports is the relationship between quality assurance activity and wider organisational priorities. ETBs describe quality assurance developments in connection with learner experience, staff professional development, public information, accessibility, digital capacity, programme responsiveness, and stakeholder engagement. This suggests that quality assurance is being positioned not only as a compliance function, but also as a mechanism for supporting planning, implementation, and review across different areas of FET provision.

The analysis also identifies variation in the stage of development of particular initiatives. Some areas, such as learner voice, policy review, digital platforms, staff professional development, and data use, are referenced across most reports, although the extent and maturity of implementation differ. Other areas, including academic integrity in the context of AI, RPL implementation, blended learning, and data capacity, are described as developing areas where further work, resourcing, guidance, or embedding may be required.

Several common enabling factors are evident across the reports. These include the development of clearer governance structures, dedicated roles or teams, shared documentation systems, staff training, national collaboration, learner and stakeholder feedback, and the use of data to support monitoring and planning. At the same time, the reports point to challenges that may affect implementation, including staffing and capacity constraints, the need for consistent data quality and analysis, resource implications associated with new initiatives, and the complexity of embedding revised policies and procedures across diverse provision.

Overall, the interim reporting process provides a useful basis for identifying areas of sector-wide progress and emerging practice.



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