



## Reengagement Panel Report

### Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

#### Part 1 Details of provider

##### 1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	The National Association for Youth Drama Ltd t/a Youth Theatre Ireland
Address:	7 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1
Date of application:	30 June 2022
Date of resubmission of application:	24 October 2023
Date of site visit (if applicable):	01 December 2022
Date of reconvene meeting (if applicable)	16 November 2023
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	25 April 2023 & 07 February 2024

##### 1.2 Profile of provider

Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI), formerly the National Association for Youth Drama, was established in 1990 as the national development organisation for youth theatre. YTI's vision is to empower young people through the medium of youth theatre, providing access to drama practice, fostering the talents of young artists and young citizens by focusing on their artistic, personal, and social development.

From 1999, YTI has supported the development and training of youth theatre leaders through its ArtsTrain programme. The aim has been to provide training in youth drama facilitation and to develop an understanding of good youth theatre practice. The programme has evolved over time, with QQI accreditation and validation of a *Drama Facilitation Training* programme, leading to a level 6 QQI major award in Drama 6M3566. However, due to budgetary constraints and loss of funding, YTI has not been able to offer this full award since 2017, limiting provision to the two component modules 6N3545 *Engaging with Drama* and 6N2191 *Leadership*.

Despite the impact of recent funding constraints, YTI sees the training of youth theatre leaders and facilitators as a core element of its strategy to help develop and sustain capacity within the youth theatre sector and is committed to maintaining its current scope of training provision.



## Part 2 Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
Dr Michael Hall	Chair	Senior Lecturer/Head of Department, Health and Leisure Studies, Munster Technological University
Dr Elaine Clotworthy	Panel Member	Lecturer in Drama in Education, Marino Institute of Education
Ms Angela Higgins	Panel Member	Further Education and Training (FET) Quality Assurance, Kildare Wicklow Education & Training Board
Mr Michael Kelly	Report Writer & Panel Member	Wildgeese Training & Quality Solutions

## Part 3 Findings of the Panel

### 3.1 Summary Findings

The panel commends Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) for its engagement during the evaluation of YTI's quality assurance (QA) procedures and for developing its unique ArtsTrain programme to support the growth of young people through the medium of youth theatre. YTI has demonstrated a commitment to training across the youth theatre sector, with innovative approaches (e.g., the use of experiential learning where mentors support the tutors by acting as facilitators with the learners in trying out the learning objectives being taught and feeding back on these experiences) in the delivery of its current programmes.

Whilst recognising the impact of funding constraints and staff turnover on YTI's people resources and organisational knowledge in recent years, during its initial evaluation the panel considered that YTI's challenge was to fully document its QA policies and procedures in a comprehensive manner. This will assist YTI's tutors, support staff, learners, and other interested parties in understanding how YTI's innovative approach to training is being translated into standardised, quality-assured, and effective day-to-day practices. This would also enable YTI to fully document its current areas of effective practice, improve its QA processes to support YTI's accreditation with QQI, and help build its future training capacities in the youth theatre sector. In addition, oversight and transparency measures required improvement, with the scope and membership of the proposed committees being revisited to fully realise their objectives.

At the conclusion of its initial evaluation, the panel decided to recommend that QQI refuse approval of YTI's draft QA procedures pending a number of mandatory changes, as set out in Section 7.1 of this report. These amendments would ensure that YTI's QA procedures are fully aligned with QQI requirements, as described in the *Core and Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016). Furthermore, these measures would also enhance YTI's overall QA framework and ensure that it is fit for purpose in



relation to its current delivery of two National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 6 component modules and support future plans to deliver the full extent of its level 6 *Drama Facilitation Training* programme.

Following the panel’s recommendation to QQI, YTI was required to resubmit its revised draft QA procedures (including evidence of its response to the mandatory changes identified within this report) for further evaluation.

The panel reconvened on 16 November 2023 to consider the revised QA procedures and supporting material submitted by YTI. The outcome of this further evaluation was that all of the mandatory changes required had been addressed by YTI in a satisfactory manner. Therefore, the panel was pleased to recommend to QQI that YTI’s QA procedures be approved, subject to one condition of approval set out in section 6.1 of this report.

### 3.2 Recommendation of the panel to Programmes and Awards Executive Committee of QQI

#### 3.2.1 With regard to Youth Theatre Ireland’s application for reengagement with its current scope of provision.

	Tick ✓ <u>one</u> as appropriate
Approve Youth Theatre Ireland’s draft QA procedures	✓
Refuse approval of Youth Theatre Ireland’s draft QA procedures pending mandatory changes set out in Section 7.1 <small>(If this recommendation is accepted by QQI, the provider may make a revised application within six months of the decision)</small>	
Refuse to approve Youth Theatre Ireland’s draft QA procedures	



## Part 4 Evaluation of provider capacity

### 4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>4.1.1(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?</i>	Yes	The National Association for Youth Drama Ltd is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status while Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) is a registered business name. The ArtsTrain initiative has formed an essential part of YTI's training in youth drama facilitation and good theatre practice.
<b>4.1.2(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?</i>	Yes	The National Association for Youth Drama Ltd is a company registered in Ireland and Youth Theatre Ireland is a registered business name in Ireland. YTI has funding arrangements with various youth support and arts agencies in Ireland which include support for the ArtsTrain programme. This was originally accredited by FETAC in 2007 and YTI has continued to offer programmes leading to QQI awards at NFQ level 6 up to the present time.
<b>4.1.3(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?</i>	Yes	YTI has funding arrangements with various State-funded agencies and has worked with a range of external partners to promote youth theatre, including youth arts organisations, the post-primary teaching sector and local authority arts offices.
<b>4.1.4(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?</i>	Yes	YTI has received funding from relevant third parties as part of its annual strategic funding, including the Arts Council of Ireland and the Department of Children, Equality, Diversity Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) as a national youth work organisation. In addition, YTI is also a Creative Youth partner organisation supported by Creative Ireland.
<b>4.1.5(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?</i>	Yes	YTI is required to meet corporate governance and compliance standards as part of its annual funding requirements. YTI has also provided documented evidence of corporate compliance and tax clearance, together with accounts, professional indemnity and public liability



			insurance cover, plus a compliance declaration signed by YTI's Director.
<b>4.1.6(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.</i>	Yes	YTI receives funding from State bodies in part to support its overall training activities. YTI also has a track record with QQI (and previously with FETAC) in the delivery of programmes leading to QQI awards NFQ level 6.

## Findings

The panel considers that Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) has provided sufficient information and supporting evidence to meet the required legal and compliance criteria for Section 4.1.

## 4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.2.1(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?</i>	Yes	Whilst YTI depends on annual funding allocations from State-sponsored cultural and educational agencies to assist with its training activities, the panel is generally satisfied that it is in a position to maintain its current scope of training activities.
4.2.2(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?</i>	Yes	YTI has demonstrated a sound business case for its training initiatives, both QQI-accredited and other non-accredited programmes.
4.2.3(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision-making structures in place?</i>	Yes	Following changes in staffing and funding pressures in recent years, YTI acknowledged a need to develop its organisational knowledge and processes in relation to its training delivery, plus ensure oversight and transparency at both academic and board levels in relation to its QQI programme



			<p>provision. During its initial evaluation the panel concurred with this analysis and set a mandatory change in relation to this area of management and governance which is outlined in Section 7.1 of this report.</p> <p>During its reconvened meeting the panel evaluated the revised governance and management QA procedures of YTI. There was now a clear separation of day-to-day management functions and academic governance within YTI's training delivery. The role of the Director had been amended so that this individual was limited to oversight of staff training, with the Education Committee being reconstituted to include two independent, external members. Terms of reference had been revised to reflect these changes and the Education Committee's role included an annual self-evaluation of QQI accredited training, including a report to YTI's Board on this area. Therefore, the panel concluded that a clear separation of academic and commercial decision-making had been documented within the QA system and so the mandatory change had now been met.</p>
4.2.4(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?</i>	Yes	YTI meets the requirements for QQI reporting in relation to its current scope of provision, with designated programme coordinators and supporting procedures

## Findings

At the conclusion of its initial evaluation, the panel was of the view that Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) had met the criteria for Section 4.2, except for Section 4.2.3(a). The panel established a mandatory change for YTI in this area to include revisiting the governance, management and decision-making processes as originally drafted to ensure an adequate separation of business and educational interests across YTI's training activities. When the panel reconvened to evaluate YTI's revised QA procedures it was satisfied that the changes had been adequately addressed by the provider so the requirements of Section 4.2 can be recommended by the panel as satisfying QQI's reengagement QA requirements.

**4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>4.3.1(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?</i>	Yes	YTI has a track record with QQI (and previously with FETAC) in the delivery of programmes leading to QQI awards at NFQ level 6. YTI also has extensive experience in the provision of non-accredited skills training within youth drama and theatre.
<b>4.3.2(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?</i>	Yes	YTI staffing for training activities is monitored at board level in conjunction with external funding applications. The provider acknowledged the impact of staff turnover on the stability of the organisation's training delivery over the previous 5 years. However, YTI has indicated that the reengagement process with QQI has provided an opportunity to better document training processes, staff roles and related supports. Therefore, the panel concluded that there was sufficient training staff to deliver the two current level 6 component modules leading to QQI awards.
<b>4.3.3(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with the standard conditions for validation specified in Section 45(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (the Act)?</i>	Yes	YTI has the capacity to cooperate with QQI in meeting the information requirements of Section 45(3) of the 2012 Act.
<b>4.3.4(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?</i>	Yes	YTI has the required facilities and resources to support its current scope of provision with QQI. YTI has confirmed that it has no plans to extend this scope of provision at the present time.
<b>4.3.5(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?</i>	Yes	YTI has a policy and processes in place to support admissions and referrals to programmes leading to QQI awards, together with appropriate transfer and progression arrangements.



<b>4.3.6(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?</i>	Yes	<p>Following its initial evaluation, the panel concluded that YTI must revisit its assessment procedures, addressing these in stepped processes supported by the different monitoring and approval stages, and supported by an academic appeals process. This would help YTI to ensure that assessment structures and procedures meet QQI requirements. This further work was specified as a mandatory change in Section 7.1 of this report.</p> <p>During its reconvened meeting the panel reviewed the revised QA materials in relation to assessment, including the updated Learner Handbook and Training QA Manual. The latter now includes a detailed step-by-step assessment procedure so has broadly dealt with the mandatory change in this area. The Learner Handbook addresses assessment as part of a Learner Journey to Accreditation and also refers to academic appeals. However, as appeals form an important part of QA procedures this needs to be included within the main body of the Training QA Manual. Therefore, the panel has included a condition within section 6.1 of this report requiring that academic appeals processes must be described as an end-to-end stepped procedure in both the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook.</p>
<b>4.3.7(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?</i>	Yes	<p>In its initial evaluation the panel noted that YTI has recently secured a suitable insurance policy to cover its Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL) contingencies. However, the provider's quality assurance documentation, information for learners and other interested parties, etc. had not been updated to reflect this PEL cover. Therefore, a mandatory change in this</p>



			<p>regard has been included in Sections 5.2 and 7.1 below.</p> <p>When the panel reconvened to evaluate the revised QA documentation it was noted that the new versions of the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook now explicitly referred to the PEL provisions, so the mandatory change was now satisfied.</p>
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### Findings

In its evaluation the panel was of the view that Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) had met the criteria for Section 4.3, with the exception of Sections 4.3.6 (a) and 4.3.7 (a). Therefore, the panel established mandatory changes in these areas to include:

- Revisit assessment QA to break this down into step-by-step processes, including the different approval and monitoring levels, together with an academic appeals process.
- The provider’s quality assurance documentation, information for learners and other interested parties, etc. must be updated to reflect this Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) cover.

At its reconvened meeting the panel further evaluated the revised Training QA Manual and related QA materials and concluded that the concerns in relation to assessment and PEL had been satisfactorily addressed. Therefore, the QA requirements under section 4.3 in relation to programme provision had now been met.



#### **4.4 Overall findings in respect of provider capacity to provide sustainable education and training**

Overall, during its initial evaluation, the panel was generally satisfied that Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) had the capacity to provide sustainable education and training programmes. However, there were several areas identified by the panel during its evaluation and these would need to be addressed by YTI to meet QQI's quality assurance (QA) requirements, as follows:

- Revise the current management and governance structure to ensure a clear separation of roles in relation to academic and commercial decision-making.
- Revisit assessment QA to break this down into step-by-step processes, including the different approval and monitoring levels, together with an academic appeals process. Quality assurance documentation, information for learners and other interested parties, etc. must be updated to reflect Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) cover.

These mandatory changes were specified by the panel in order to fully comply with QQI's Core QA Guidelines and were included in Section 7.1 of this report.

When the panel reconvened on 16 November 2023 to further evaluate the revised QA documentation it concluded that the three mandatory changes in relation to the provision of sustainable education and training were now satisfied.



## Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by Youth Theatre Ireland

The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of Youth Theatre Ireland's quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) and Topic Specific QA Guidelines. Sections 1-11 of the report follows the structure and referencing of the Core QA Guidelines.

### 1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

#### Panel Findings:

The QQI Core Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines require that a training provider has an effective and comprehensive governance, management, and quality assurance system in place in order to oversee all of its education and training activities. During its initial evaluation the panel concluded that Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) did not fully meet these criteria so required mandatory changes in this area.

YTI's strategy at a corporate level provides for the training of youth theatre leaders and facilitators to assist in developing and sustaining capacity across the youth theatre sector in Ireland. YTI's ArtsTrain initiative is a result of this strategy and includes dedicated youth theatre leader training programmes, leading to YTI's unique NFQ level 6 QQI major award in *Drama Facilitation Training*, alongside other non-accredited programmes. However, due to funding constraints, only two components of the major award have been offered in recent years, *6N3545 Engaging with Drama* and *6N2191 Leadership*.

As part of its self-evaluation exercise in relation to its reengagement with QQI, YTI acknowledged that training formed a core element of its work, although training activities have often been viewed as a silo within the wider organisation. Therefore, whilst YTI believes that the capacity to deliver quality training exists, historically oversight responsibilities have been too dispersed across the organisational structures within YTI. Furthermore, YTI had identified gaps within its quality assurance (QA) and academic oversight, and these were being addressed through the creation of new committees, staff training in QA, updated tutor/ learner handbooks, and revised training QA procedures.

YTI expected that the proposed committee structures will assist the organisation in effectively separating corporate and academic decision-making processes, thereby creating greater autonomy and transparency to better represent the interests of different stakeholders in YTI's training activities. An example of these changes had been the creation of the new Education Committee to provide academic oversight, comprising three board members and with a proposed two independent members. However, during its initial evaluation the panel considered that further enhancement was required to this structure to fully separate academic and corporate areas within YTI's training provision. Additional committees have also been created to address human resources (HR)/finance and staff training.

In summary, during its initial evaluation the panel noted YTI's commitment to improving its management and the governance of its training activities but concluded that a number of mandatory changes to the QA system as proposed would be required to support this. Therefore, YTI must:

- Revise the current management and governance structure to ensure a clear separation of roles in relation to academic and commercial decision-making.
- Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.



- Develop an academic component to the Risk Register to reflect risks specific to academic and training-related issues.
- Amend committee memberships to ensure adequate separation of commercial and educational interests across the organisation.
- Improve the new programme development, approval and review processes to include both academic and financial/corporate approval levels.

Furthermore, the panel has offered the following specific advices as areas to enhance YTI's governance and oversight functions in respect of its training provision:

- Include more flowcharts and diagrams within the QA Manual to aid implementation by users.
- Benchmark existing QA practice against other similar providers in the Arts and Creative sectors and other sectors as appropriate.

Following the submission of revised QA documentation, the panel reconvened to review this evidence and noted the revised corporate management and academic governance structures (which included a clearer separation of corporate and academic roles), the revised Training QA Manual (in a version-controlled and user-friendly format) which can be expected to better support YTI's training activities, the updated academic risk management procedures, plus revised and enhanced programme development processes. Therefore, the panel was satisfied that the five mandatory changes in relation to governance and management had now been satisfied. To further support these changes, the panel has recommended an additional area of specific advice section 7.2 of this report, as follows:

- The provider should review the operation of the QA system after 12 months, including user feedback, to evaluate its experiences and identify areas for improvement.

## 2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

### **Panel Findings:**

The QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines require that a training provider operates a fully documented quality assurance (QA) system with robust policies and procedures in place to support this. The panel concluded that, whilst YTI has made some progress in this area as part of its planning for reengagement with QQI, the Quality Assurance Manual as originally presented was not fully developed so was not fit for purpose. Therefore, QA documentation as presented to the panel did not fully meet QQI's criteria.

During the course of its initial evaluation, the panel noted the impact of funding restrictions and staff turnover on YTI's training activities. YTI representatives acknowledged that much organisational knowledge had been lost due to staff changes and recent QA work had attempted to capture this information within a documented QA framework. It was recognised that written QA policies and procedures would help in meeting QQI requirements and in delivering effective training programmes.

At the end of its initial evaluation the panel concluded that further work was required and proposed a number of mandatory changes to the QA system as presented for review. Therefore, YTI must:

- Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.



- Develop an academic component to the Risk Register to reflect risks specific to academic and training-related issues.
- Improve the new programme development, approval and review processes to include both academic and financial/corporate approval levels.
- Include a complaints procedure within the QA Manual.
- Data collection/retention policies and procedures should be more detailed, including duration of storage and schedule for destruction.
- Quality assurance documentation, information for learners and other interested parties, etc. must be updated to reflect Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) cover.

When the panel reconvened to evaluate the revised Training QA Manual and related QA materials it noted that they had adopted a more user-friendly format, including version controls, plus a revised Risk Register which now includes an academic component. Similarly, the programme development process included clearer corporate and academic approval stages (with flowcharts used to guide users), the Training QA Manual now includes a two-stage Complaints process, and PEL information has been updated. Data management procedures have also been addressed (see section 5.8).

Furthermore, the panel had offered the following specific advice on areas to enhance YTI's QA documentation in respect of its training provision:

- Include more flowcharts and diagrams within the QA Manual to aid implementation by users.
- Ensure that QQI policies and guidance, together with relevant legislation is referenced within the QA Manual.
- Consider a combined QA Manual to include QQI provision and non-accredited programmes in the future.

Following its further evaluation, the panel has made four further specific advices in relation to this QA area under section 7.2, as follows:

- Carry out a further proofreading exercise on the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook to improve its quality and ease of use (e.g., typographical errors).
- Further define the procedures in relation to Work-based Learning as distinct from Work Placement (e.g., learner information, learner tasks and any related assessments).
- Improve the academic risk analysis in the Risk Register, e.g. a separate breakdown of the academic risks identified in relation to programmes, with separate mitigation measures.
- Procedures in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression should be reviewed to: (a) clearly define Progression in line with QQI's published terminology to avoid any confusion for learners and users of the QA system; and (b) monitor the operation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures in terms of the committee responsible for RPL oversight, cases in which RPL may arise, and the experience of RPL within other similar training providers.



### 3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### **Panel Findings:**

QQI's Core Guidelines require that programme delivery, development and monitoring follow a systematic approach. In addition, a consistent approach to learner access, transfer and progression (ATP) is required, together with recognition of prior learning. At the end of its initial evaluation the panel concluded that YTI must undertake further work in order to fully meet QQI's requirements in this area.

YTI offers a unique programme geared to the specific needs of the youth theatre sector, the NFQ level 6 QQI major award in *Drama Facilitation Training*. Unfortunately, funding constraints arising since 2017 have meant that only two components of the major award have been offered in recent years, *6N3545 Engaging with Drama* and *6N2191 Leadership*. Although YTI's current focus has been on programme enhancements rather than new programme development, it was recognised that the wider programme monitoring and development areas need to be addressed within its training practices and in the day-to-day application of its QA practices.

Admission procedures take account of educational levels achieved and/or prior experience deemed relevant to YTI's programme. YTI's programme is unique so transfers are unlikely, although learners who successfully complete YTI's programmes may progress to other further/higher education and training options.

In addition to its use of tutors in programme delivery, YTI has also used mentors as facilitators who are industry-experienced professionals, and who are able to support learners on a 1-to-1 basis as they progress through their component modules towards QQI awards.

In response to QQI's temporary delivery measures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, YTI had taken steps to improve access for youth theatre leaders nationally by providing some elements of its training programmes through online synchronous programme delivery, with other parts taking place live online with tutors, while summative assessments and other training and assessment elements of the modules are carried out and delivered in person. YTI has found that synchronous delivery has reduced the number of in-person days for learner participants, thereby making attendance easier for participants across the country. However, at the time of its reengagement application, YTI as a training provider has not applied for an extension of its scope of provision to include blended learning and has no current plans to apply for specific blended learning QA approval.

Whilst YTI's recent focus had been on its current programme delivery rather than new programme development, the panel concluded that further work was required in the area of programme development and delivery and set a mandatory change in this area. In summary, YTI must:

- Improve the new programme development, approval and review processes to include both academic and financial/corporate approval levels.

When the panel reconvened to evaluate the revised QA documentation in relation to new programme development it noted the separate academic and corporate approval levels, with the process being guided by flowcharts to assist users of the QA system. This new procedure will apply to both QQI accredited and any unaccredited training programmes. The panel concluded that the mandatory change under this section had now been satisfied.



As part of its further evaluation, the panel has identified a further specific advice in relation to access, transfer and progression (ATP) and recognition of prior learning (RPL), as shown in section 7.2 of this report:

- Procedures in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression should be reviewed to: (a) clearly define Progression in line with QQI's published terminology to avoid any confusion for learners and users of the QA system; and (b) monitor the operation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures in terms of the committee responsible for RPL oversight, cases in which RPL may arise, and the experience of RPL within other similar training providers.

#### **4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

##### ***Panel Findings:***

QQI's Core Guidelines require that a training provider takes responsibility for the quality of its staff, including recruitment, management and development, providing a supportive environment which enables staff to carry out their work effectively. At the end of its initial evaluation the panel concluded that YTI must undertake further development in this area as current practice does not fully meet the required QA standards at the present time.

As noted earlier in this report, YTI has experienced a high level of staff turnover, with the current core tutor complement being two skilled tutors, comprising the National Training Coordinator and Special Projects Officer. A Tutor Handbook has been created recently to provide guidance to tutors on their role and duties, including teaching methodologies, programme delivery and assessment methods. Tutors are required to focus on their role as facilitators rather than instructors, using experiential learning techniques to deliver the programme component modules. They are also supported by mentors who augment the learner experience, showcasing different facilitation styles and techniques, working with learners in small workshop groups (or on a 1-to-1 basis) in building skills and competencies across the two component module areas. Staff progress is formally reviewed annually by YTI's Director and a training budget is available to support staff development needs.

The panel recognised that YTI's training staff are involved in the delivery of a unique programme. However, whilst this area is generally satisfactory, during its initial evaluation the panel considered that YTI would benefit from better documenting its staffing processes alongside other areas, as noted in Section 5.2 above. Therefore, in the context of staff recruitment, management and development YTI must:

- Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.

Following the submission of revised QA documentation, the panel reconvened to evaluate this further evidence and noted the revised staffing procedures in the revised Training QA Manual which can be expected to better support YTI's recruitment, staff management and development activities. Therefore, the panel was generally satisfied that the mandatory change in relation to staffing matters had now been satisfied. To further support these changes, the panel has recommended an additional area of specific advice in section 7.2 of this report, as follows:



- The provider should review the operation of the QA system after 12 months, including user feedback, to evaluate its experiences and identify areas for improvement.

## 5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

### **Panel Findings:**

QQI's Core Guidelines require that providers monitor the quality of the teaching and learning experience on a continuous basis, with a view to improving overall quality across training and education programme delivery. The goal is to develop a learning community using reflective practice across different learning environments. The panel concluded that YTI meets these requirements.

Tutors are required to develop flexible lesson plans using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to respond to the needs of a diverse group of learners. Experiential learning is encouraged, i.e., learning by doing, with the tutor acting as facilitator and the learner reflecting on their experiences. As noted in Section 5.4 above, mentors support teaching and learning, acting as facilitators for individual learning. YTI has also availed of online synchronous delivery under QQI COVID-19 derogations, and this temporary measure has proved popular with learners and tutors, extending the potential reach of the current programme. Therefore, as noted in Section 5.3 above, if YTI plans to deliver part or all of its programmes synchronously or asynchronously, it will need to apply separately for specific blended learning QA approval once the current process has successfully concluded.

The onsite training venue has moved from Dublin City Centre to Maynooth University, but YTI's general venue criteria reflects the goal of practical skills development. Venue requirements include: an existing arts space, with a dance floor/sprung floor for movement, the ability to darken the room so projectors, AV effects, etc. can be used, plus a theatrical space with a stage, audience seating, lighting board, sound system, costume and set storage facilities.

Certain modules include a supervised work placement within a cultural organisation. This offers the learner the opportunity to link academic theory with practice. It also offers the opportunity to shadow an experienced practitioner, exploring career options and engaging in professional networking.



## 6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

### **Panel Findings:**

QQI quality assurance (QA) guidelines require that assessment conforms with standards of fairness, consistency, and fitness for purpose. During its initial evaluation the panel concluded that YTI must undertake further development in this area as current practice did not fully meet the required QA standards at the present time.

Assessment requirements are derived from the QQI component specification, with the tutor following an agreed assessment brief geared to the module learning outcomes, e.g., learner journals and written assignments. As the programme may be delivered over a 6 to 9-month timescale, there are regular individual learner updates from the tutor with a two-way reflection on progress and potential areas for improvement. Workplace supervisors also receive guidance from YTI on any assessment requirements, e.g., preparation of reports on individual learners.

Assessment outcomes are reviewed both internally within YTI and externally via the External Authenticator, with a reporting line to the new Education Committee. However, at the end of its initial evaluation the panel concluded that YTI would benefit from an end-to-end review of its assessment process to capture wider organisational knowledge and QQI requirements, clearly mapping each stage and the responsibilities of those monitoring/ approving results, including the appeals process and the composition of the Results Approval Panel (RAP).

In summary, YTI must:

- Revisit assessment QA to break this down into step-by-step processes, including the different approval and monitoring levels, together with an academic appeals process.
- Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.

Following the submission of revised QA documentation, the panel reconvened to evaluate this further evidence and noted that the Training QA Manual now includes a detailed step-by-step assessment procedure. The QA manual and related QA materials have also adopted a more user-friendly format, including version controls. Therefore, the panel concluded that both the mandatory changes under this section had been satisfied.

Following its further evaluation, the panel has made three further areas of specific advice in relation to the above (see section 7.2), as follows:

- The provider should review the operation of the QA system after 12 months, including user feedback, to evaluate its experiences and identify areas for improvement.
- Carry out a further proofreading exercise on the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook to improve its quality and ease of use (e.g., typographical errors).
- Further define the procedures in relation to Work-based Learning as distinct from Work Placement (e.g., learner information, learner tasks and any related assessments)

**7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS****Panel Findings:**

QQI's quality assurance (QA) guidelines require that the adequacy of learner resources is monitored on a regular basis, with access to pastoral care, learner representation and related services to help support learners during programme delivery. During its initial evaluation the panel noted YTI's commitment to supporting individual learners on their learner journey through the programme, and its recognition of the diversity of its learners. However, the panel concluded that there were a number of areas requiring improvement within this area requiring further action on the part of YTI.

YTI's website includes detailed information on its training programmes and prospective learners are encouraged to contact the National Training Co-Ordinator for further information and guidance. There is a structured learner interview as part of the admissions process and this provides an opportunity to identify individual training needs, together with information technology (IT) skills, specific learner support requirements, etc. prior to commencement of the programme. The induction session introduces some of the training methods to be used, including a discussion on the range of supports available to learners and the Learner Handbook is issued at this event. The mentor role provides further monitoring and intervention opportunities during programme delivery to support individual learners as necessary.

The panel considered that YTI's approach to learner supports displayed elements of good practice but that this was not fully reflected within QA documentation. Therefore, in relation to learner supports, YTI must:

- Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.
- Include a complaints procedure within the QA Manual.

Furthermore, to improve the area of learner support within YTI, the panel has included the following specific advice in its evaluation:

- Clarify how learners contact designated person(s) to discuss supports.

Following the submission of revised QA documentation, the panel reconvened to review this new evidence and noted the revised procedures in the revised Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook available in a more user-friendly format, including details of a two-stage Complaints process.

During this further evaluation, the panel has identified an additional area of specific advice, as follows:

- Carry out a further proofreading exercise on the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook to improve its quality and ease of use (e.g., typographical errors).



## 8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

### **Panel Findings:**

QQI quality assurance (QA) guidelines require a provider to operate reliable information and data management systems to help inform decision-making, review progress against objectives, and identify areas requiring further action. This may include generating standard reports for use by staff and management in self-monitoring and QA enhancement activities. The panel concluded that there are a number of areas requiring improvement within this area for YTI.

Currently, learner records and staff data are held in a cloud-based platform with defined and restricted access procedures within YTI. Learner applications, assessment materials, evaluations, etc. are normally retained by YTI until any potential appeals period has elapsed. Other learner data may need to be retained to meet YTI obligations in relation to funding requirements.

During its initial evaluation of the QA system the panel concluded that YTI must review and take further action to streamline its data management procedures, as follows:

- Data collection/retention policies and procedures should be more detailed, including duration of storage and schedules for data destruction.

When the panel reconvened to evaluate the revised QA documentation it noted that an extensive review of YTI's data management procedures has occurred, with improved procedures covering data collection, storage and retention, together with data utilisation procedures. The relevant section within the Training QA Manual has been updated to reflect these enhancements and so the panel is satisfied that this mandatory change has now been met.

During the course of this further evaluation the panel has identified an additional area of specific advice, as follows:

- Carry out a further proofreading exercise on the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook to improve its quality and ease of use (e.g., typographical errors).

## 9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### **Panel Findings:**

QQI quality assurance (QA) guidelines require that a provider gives clear, accessible, and accurate information on its core activities including accredited and non-accredited programmes, its QA procedures, and the processes for access, transfer, and progression (ATP). In addition, a provider is required to make available programme information for both current and prospective learners, together with QA evaluation reports. During its initial evaluation the panel concluded that YTI generally meets the requirements under this section but that current organisational knowledge and practices needed to be formalised.

The YTI website includes details of the range of training programmes and contact persons for further information. The QA Manual as originally drafted stated that the Director and the Staff Training Committee are responsible for ensuring the quality and the accuracy of all public information published by YTI. In addition to the YTI website, this information includes annual reports, formal self-evaluation



reports, etc. YTI also indicated that the Staff Training Committee and the Education Committee will approve any programme-related information prior to its publication.

Once approved by QQI, the QA Manual must also be made available on the provider's website.

The panel concluded that formal public information review and sign-off procedures should be revisited and documented in more detail. In summary, YTI must:

- Amend committee memberships to ensure adequate separation of commercial and educational interests across the organisation.
- Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.

When the panel reconvened to evaluate the revised Training QA Manual and related QA materials it noted that committee structures and terms of reference had been revised to ensure a clearer separation of corporate and academic matters, together greater transparency of decision-making, with two independent roles on the Education Committee. Furthermore, the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook were now available in a more user-friendly format, including version controls.

During the course of this further evaluation the panel has identified an additional area of specific advice, as follows:

- Carry out a further proofreading exercise on the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook to improve its quality and ease of use (e.g., typographical errors).

## **10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (incl. Apprenticeships)**

### ***Panel Findings:***

QQI quality assurance (QA) guidelines require that peer relationships across training and education are monitored by the provider and are subject to effective QA oversight. External partnerships and independent experts operate within documented terms of engagement, including prior due diligence, ethical practice considerations and appropriate conflict management.

Currently, YTI has funding relationships with the Arts Council of Ireland and the Department of Children, Equality, Diversity Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) as a national youth work organisation. In addition, YTI is also a Creative Youth partner organisation supported by Creative Ireland. These funding streams are subject to documented management and monitoring arrangements, and the panel is satisfied that QA guidelines are being met in this area.

**11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW****Panel Findings:**

QQI quality assurance (QA) guidelines require that a provider's internal QA system links effectively with its external QA obligations. Therefore, internal reviews and self-evaluations of quality, including reviews of programmes of education and training, are seen as a fundamental part of a provider's wider QA system. This assists the provider in identifying current fields of effective practice as well as areas for improvement.

During its initial evaluation of the QA system, the panel noted that YTI has documented a range of feedback and self-evaluation methods, including tutor/learner reviews, internal committee and staff meetings, plus assessment reports. This contributes to both organisational knowledge and future actions, so it is important that the results of these reviews are properly documented (although the QA Manual as originally drafted included a template for this purpose). In addition, the panel considered that benchmarking practices and experiences with other arts and cultural education organisations may provide useful data and insights to guide future YTI strategy in training.

Therefore, the panel has concluded that, in relation to self-evaluation and monitoring, YTI must:

1. Fully develop the documented QA system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. This should include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.

When the panel reconvened to evaluate the revised Training QA Manual and related QA materials it noted that they had adopted a more user-friendly format, including version controls, so this will help YTI in future monitoring and evaluations.

Furthermore, YTI had identified FE and HE education bodies in the Dublin area as suitable benchmarking partners for its programmes and supporting QA procedures. The panel encourages YTI to formally schedule benchmarking activities with these FE and HE partners to support future self-evaluations.



## Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings

The panel commends The National Association for Youth Drama Ltd t/a Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) for its unique and innovative approach to training and education in the youth theatre sector. This has continued despite funding constraints and YTI made a commitment to address the issues identified by the panel during its initial evaluation in order to continue to support and develop YTI's current scope of training provision.

QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) guidelines require that any provider undergoing reengagement must satisfactorily address all of the QA guidelines in this area, so it is important that a provider attains this quality standard. Therefore, at the conclusion of its initial work, the panel was not in a position to recommend outright approval of YTI's QA procedures, so the panel recommended to QQI to refuse approval of the draft QA procedures pending mandatory changes.

Based on its initial evaluation, the panel identified nine mandatory changes, together with five areas of specific advice to be addressed by YTI. It should be noted that many of these mandatory changes will benefit YTI as a training provider by enabling it to fully document current areas of effective practice. Since the panel's initial report on its evaluation, YTI has prepared revised QA documentation reflecting the mandatory changes and the panel reconvened on 16 November 2023 to evaluate the revised submission by YTI. During this further evaluation, the panel considered that all of the mandatory changes set out in section 7.1 of this report had now been addressed in a satisfactory manner.

Based on this further evaluation, the panel was able to recommend to QQI that YTI's QA procedures be approved, subject to a condition set out in section 6.1 of this report. The panel considered that this condition would assist YTI in ensuring that its QA system is robust and able to fully support its training and education activities into the future.

During its reconvened meeting, the panel identified potential areas for further improvements in YTI's QA system and these have been included as specific advice in section 7.2 of this report. The view was that these areas of potential further improvement in QA would complement the condition of approval referred to in section 6.1, helping to ensure a cohesive system, with effective linkages across the various QA components.



## Part 6 Conditions of QA Approval

### 6.1 Conditions of QA Approval

The panel proposes the following condition of QA approval:

1. References to academic appeals in the Quality Assurance Manual (and also where this is referred to in the Learner Handbook) must be further developed with an explicit policy and step-by-step process to support the appeals procedure.

## Part 7 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice

### 7.1 Mandatory Changes

After its initial evaluation and meeting with the provider, the panel identified the following mandatory changes and specific advices:

1. Revise the current management and governance structure to ensure a clear separation of roles in relation to academic and commercial decision-making.
2. Fully develop the documented quality assurance (QA) system to include more concise user instructions and version controls, capturing and building on all existing practices to provide a system that can be used by all staff within the organisation. Include the use of appendices and templates for information that may change more frequently.
3. Develop an academic component to the Risk Register to reflect risks specific to academic and training-related issues.
4. Amend committee membership to ensure adequate separation of commercial and educational interests across the organisation.
5. Revisit assessment QA to break this down into step-by-step processes, including the different approval and monitoring levels, together with an academic appeals process.
6. Improve the new programme development, approval and review processes to include both academic and financial/corporate approval levels.
7. Include a complaints procedure within the QA Manual.
8. Data collection/retention policies and procedures should be more detailed, including duration of storage and schedule for destruction.
9. Quality assurance documentation, information for learners and other interested parties, etc. must be updated to reflect Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) cover.



## 7.2 Specific Advice

1. Include more flowcharts and diagrams within the QA Manual to aid implementation by users.
2. Benchmark existing QA practice against other similar providers in the Arts and Creative sectors and other sectors as appropriate.
3. Clarify how learners contact designated person(s) to discuss supports.
4. Ensure that QQI policies and guidance, together with relevant legislation is referenced within the QA Manual.
5. Consider a combined QA Manual to include QQI provision and non-accredited programmes in the future.

Following its further evaluation, the panel has made five further items of specific advice under section 7.2, as follows:

- Carry out a further proofreading exercise on the Training QA Manual and Learner Handbook to improve its quality and ease of use (e.g., typographical errors).
- Further define the procedures in relation to Work-based Learning as distinct from Work Placement (e.g., learner information, learner tasks and any related assessments)
- Improve the academic risk analysis in the Risk Register, e.g. a separate breakdown of the academic risks identified in relation to programmes, with separate mitigation measures.
- Procedures in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression should be reviewed to: (a) clearly define Progression in line with QQI's published terminology to avoid any confusion for learners and users of the QA system; and (b) monitor the operation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures in terms of the committee responsible for RPL oversight, cases in which RPL may arise, and the experience of RPL within other similar training providers.
- The provider should review the operation of the QA system after 12 months, including user feedback, to evaluate its experiences and identify areas for improvement.

## Part 8 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider

NFQ Level(s) – min and max	Award Class(es)	Discipline areas
5 to 6	Major	Arts and humanities
Delivered full time and part time, face-to-face only.		



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

## **Part 9      Approval by Chair of the Panel**

This report of the panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the approval of the draft Quality Assurance Procedures of Youth Theatre Ireland.

Name:   
Dr Michael Hall

Date:            19 December 2023



## **Annexe 1: Documentation provided to the Panel in the course of the Evaluation**

### Document

Training QA Manual (draft) – Sep 2022
Application for Reengagement (14 Sep 2022)
YTI Organisational Structure Chart
Provider presentation to QQI panel (Dec 2022)
Tutor/trainer Handbook
Learner Handbook
Mentor Handbook
Response to panel's additional queries (Nov 2022)
Committees' Terms of Reference
New programme development graphic
YTI Risk Assessment
QQI Provider Reports/ Statistics
Assessment Handbook (and related procedures documents)
Self-evaluation Monitoring & Review Policy
Synchronous Programme Delivery Policy
Audited Accounts/ Financial Statements 2018-2021
Funding Agreements/SLAs & Budget Planning
Indemnity Insurance 2022
PEL insurance letter (10 Oct 2022)
YTI Premises Lease 2020-2023



Charities Regulator Annual Report 2020
Company Registration, etc. documentation
Child Safeguarding Policy
Tax clearance statement 2022
YTI Covid Risk Assessment
YTI Cover Memo (reengagement responses), October 2023
Learner Handbook (2.0), October 2023
2023 Annual Risk Assessment
Training QA Manual (2.0), October 2023

## **Annexe 2: Provider staff met in the course of the Evaluation**

Name	Role/Position
Eoghan Doyle	Director
Dave Kelly	National Training Coordinator
Barry Morgan	Special Projects Officer
Casey Hallahan	QQI Training Programme Mentor

*Appendix: Provider response to the Reengagement Panel Report*

Eoghan Doyle  
Youth Theatre Ireland  
7 North Great Georges Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 X7Y8

9<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
26-27 Denzille Lane,  
Dublin 2,  
D02 P266

To Whom It May Concern:

Youth Theatre Ireland confirm the receipt of the final reengagement panel report from QQI with regard to our reengagement process. We can also confirm that there are no factual inaccuracies within the final report.

Youth Theatre Ireland are delighted to accept the panel's recommendation for approval.

Youth Theatre Ireland can also confirm that we will address the condition for approval, as stated within the report, and can confirm that the condition will be met by Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Youth Theatre Ireland would once again like to extend our thanks to the reengagement panel and in particular the QQI team who supported us through this process. We look forward to continued engagement with QQI over the coming years.

If you have any further questions or queries in relation to this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



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Eoghan Doyle Director  
Youth Theatre Ireland

