



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards

Report of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

Stage 1

Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1 Details of applicant provider and its proposed education and training provision

1.1 Applicant Provider

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| Registered Business/Trading Name: | East Coast Air Conditioning Limited |
| Address: | Stabannon, Castlebellingham, Co Louth. A91VK44 |
| Date of Application: | 07 December 2020 |
| Date of resubmission of application: | 08 August 2021 |
| Date of site visit (if applicable): | 16 March 2021 |
| Date of reconvene meeting (if applicable): | 20 September 2021 |
| Date of recommendation to the Approvals and Reviews Committee: | 20th May 2021 1st November 2021 |



1.2 Profile of applicant provider

East Coast Air Conditioning (ECAC) has been in operation for over 21 years. It states that it was the first provider of F Gas (Fluorinated Greenhouse Gas) training in the State. ECAC is a small and largely family-run training provider with extensive experience in its field. Since 2005 it has operated solely as a provider of training to the refrigeration, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) and heat pump industries. It describes its typical learner as a trade qualified technician dealing with refrigeration, HVAC, and heat pumps, and ranging from sole traders through to maintenance technicians working for multinational companies.

ECAC currently offers four City & Guilds F Gas courses, together with a range of bespoke courses tailored to its target market that do not lead to certification. It trains, on average, 150 learners per year. Due to the UK leaving the European Union, its City & Guilds award will no longer be recognised in Ireland. This has led to ECAC applying for initial access to validation, with a view to offering the equivalent award made by QQI.

1.3 Proposed education and training provision

| NFQ Level | Award Class | QQI Award / Proposed Programme Title |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 5 | Special Purpose | Handling Fgas Refrigerants (5S0108) |

Part 2 The Quality and Capacity Panel Membership

| Name | Role of panel member | Organisation |
|------------------|----------------------|---|
| Dr Annie Doona | Chair | Independent consultant, Former President, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology |
| Alan Hogan | QA Expert | Quality Assurance Officer, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board |
| Michael Kelly | QA Expert | Wildgeese Training & Quality Systems |
| Dr Trish O'Brien | Report Writer | Director, O'BRIEN / Governance Design |

Marie Cotter, QQI, attended the original evaluation meeting as an observer.

Marie Cotter and Walter Balfe, QQI, attended the reconvened panel meeting as observers.



Part 3 Findings of the Panel

3.1 Summary Findings

The Quality and Capacity Panel was impressed with the evident personal commitment and dedication of East Coast Air Conditioning (ECAC) to its role as a training provider. The Panel also appreciated the forthright engagement of its representatives with the Panel, which led to a clear understanding of the stage of development of ECAC as it moves from City & Guilds to seeking to provide QQI awards. The Panel saw much to recommend ECAC in its approach to its work and to the quality of its provision. It identified some gaps in its quality assurance systems and structures that needed to be addressed prior to its intended progression to seeking validation of its programmes. The Panel identified a series of mandatory changes that were intended to assist ECAC in addressing these gaps and to fully demonstrate its capacity to meet all aspects of QQI’s statutory quality assurance guidelines – see 7.1 below. These mandatory changes were subsequently addressed by ECAC to the satisfaction of the Panel. The Panel is now recommending to the Approvals and Reviews Committee that it approve the quality assurance procedures of ECAC, subject to ECAC confirming that it will address one condition (detailed in section 6.1) prior to the submission of a programme for validation to QQI.

3.2 Recommendation of the panel to Approvals and Reviews Committee of QQI

| | Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Approve East Coast Air Conditioning draft QA procedures | X |
| Refuse approval of East Coast Air Conditioning draft QA procedures pending mandatory changes set out in Section 6.1 <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 [the provider's – insert name] draft QA procedures | |



Part 4 Evaluation of the capacity of the applicant to provide quality education and training to learners.

4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

| | Criteria | Yes/No/Partially | Comments |
|----------|--|-------------------------|---|
| 4.1.1(a) | Criterion: <i>Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?</i> | Yes | ECAC is a private limited company. It provided a copy of its Certificate of Incorporation with its application. Education and training is its principal function. |
| 4.1.2(a) | Criterion: <i>Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?</i> | Yes | ECAC is incorporated in Ireland. It offers courses from premises in the Republic of Ireland. |
| 4.1.3(a) | Criterion: <i>Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?</i> | N/A | ECAC has confirmed that this criterion does not apply. |
| 4.1.4(a) | Criterion: <i>Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?</i> | N/A | ECAC has confirmed that this criterion does not apply. |
| 4.1.5(a) | Criterion: <i>Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?</i> | Yes | ECAC has confirmed that it follows regulations and legislation in the jurisdiction in which it operates. |
| 4.1.6(a) | Criterion: <i>Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where</i> | Yes | ECAC has confirmed that it is in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in the jurisdiction in which it operates. |



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| | <i>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> | | |
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Findings

The Panel is satisfied that this application meets the applicable criteria specified under *Legal and Compliance* requirements.

4.2 Resource, governance, and structural requirements:

| | Criteria | Yes/No/Partially | Comments |
|----------|--|-------------------------|---|
| 4.2.1(a) | Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?</i> | Yes | As things stand, the panel is satisfied that ECAC has sufficient resources to run its business and, in the event that it is successful in having its quality assurance procedures approved, to offer the QQI programmes that it has identified. |
| 4.2.2(a) | Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?</i> | Yes | ECAC has been offering specialist training for 21 years. Over this time, it has maintained and developed its business by focusing on repeat custom and individual service. |
| 4.2.3(a) | Criterion: <i>Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?</i> | Yes | The Panel is satisfied that ECAC has put in place appropriate governance systems to oversee its intended education and training provision. |



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| 4.2.4(a) | Criterion: <i>Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?</i> | Yes | ECAC has developed systems to support the transfer of information to City & Guilds, its current awarding body, and is confident that it can adapt these to meet QQI requirements. |
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Findings

The Panel is satisfied that this application meets the applicable criteria specified under *Resource, Governance and Structural* requirements.

4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:

| | Criteria | Yes/No/Partially | Comments |
|----------|--|-------------------------|---|
| 4.3.1(a) | Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?</i> | Yes | ECAC has been providing City & Guilds programmes since 2007. |
| 4.3.2(a) | Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and</i> | Yes | ECAC is a small, family-run, specialist training provider, which has avoided turnover of staff. The Panel has recommended that ECAC develop staff |



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| | <i>stable complement of education and training staff?</i> | | profiles that will assist it in responding quickly should its staff complement change. |
| 4.3.3(a) | Criterion: <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 | The standard conditions for validation specified in the 2012 Act include co-operation with and assistance to QQI in the performances of its functions; the establishment of procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners; and provisions for the protection of enrolled learners (PEL). Overall, the Panel is satisfied that ECAC has the capacity to comply with the standard conditions. As ECAC provides programmes of no longer than 3 months, it is not required to put PEL arrangements in place. |
| 4.3.4(a) | Criterion: <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 | ECAC provided the Panel with information about and photographs of its practical workshop training premises. As a specialist trainer it confirmed to the Panel that it is continually inspecting and adding to its facilities and equipment, as required. |
| 4.3.5(a) | Criterion: <i>Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?</i> | Yes | ECAC has processes and procedures in place for the admission of its learners. As it provides short, specialist courses in a regulated subject area, it is not able to offer learners recognition of their prior learning for the purposes of exemptions. |
| 4.3.6(a) | Criterion: <i>Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?</i> | Yes | ECAC has assessment procedures and arrangements that are appropriate to its relationship with City & Guilds. These have been revised and augmented to address QQI's requirements. The Panel has placed a condition on the need for ECAC to further contextualise these procedures, as noted in section 2 and 6.1 of this report. |



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|----------|--|-----|---|
| 4.3.7(a) | Criterion: <i>Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?</i> | N/A | The special purpose QQI award that ECAC is proposing to deliver is less than three months and therefore exempt from the need to put PEL in place. |
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Findings

The Panel is satisfied that this application meets the *Programme Development and Provision* requirements.

4.4 Evaluation of capacity to provide the proposed education and training provision - Overall finding:

The Quality and Capacity Panel is satisfied that ECAC has the capacity to provide sustainable education and training that leads to QQI awards. It appears to be financially stable; it has a highly- experienced and consistent core staff group; and it has a track record of providing programmes that lead to City & Guilds awards. The Mandatory Changes provided by the Panel were intended to strengthen the quality assurance system of ECAC to ensure that it can transition from City & Guilds to developing, assessing, and overseeing programmes leading to QQI awards. The Panel is satisfied that ECAC has addressed these mandatory changes and confirmed its capacity to provide the proposed education and training provision.



Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by East Coast Air Conditioning

The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of East Coast Air Conditioning quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016). 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 Panel met with the three key members of ECAC, who provide and manage its training, administration, and quality functions – the Managing Director (who is also the trainer / assessor and is a Director of the company), the General Manager (who is a Director of the company), and the Quality Manager. The Quality Manager, who is not a family member and is employed on a consultancy basis, expressed his independence from ECAC to the Panel; this independence was confirmed by the MD and the General Manager as being an effective and important factor in ensuring robust decision-making and in providing separation of functions in the governance of ECAC.

During its review meeting, the Panel was informed that these three individuals meet on a regular basis and this forum has been titled the Education, Training and Assessment (ETA) committee. In addition to being responsible for strategy, considering academic risks, and ensuring that ECAC is compliant with relevant legislation and regulations, the Panel was informed that the ETA committee looks at communications from external organisations, and feedback from learners and other stakeholders. ECAC also indicated that the ETA committee routinely monitors key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to course attendance, course bookings, appeals and complaints, and learner satisfaction. Decisions made by the ETA committee are recorded.

A principle of QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) is that development and approval functions are separated through a provider's governance structures. As a small provider with a limited number of individuals, the Panel appreciated that this is difficult for ECAC to achieve. The Panel noted at its meeting that the Managing Director was involved in all levels of decision-making around quality, which is problematic as commercial and quality assurance decisions are not adequately separated. Equally the proposed governance of programmes didn't illustrate how the development and approval of programme documentation would be separated, or how the roles of those awarding and reviewing grades would be distinguished. In responding to the Panel's mandatory changes regarding this, the membership of the ETA has been changed by ETAC to ensure that the Managing Director is not involved in all levels of decision making around quality. He will be replaced by a nominee of the External Advisory Group (referenced below).



The Panel noted that ECAC planned to establish an External Advisory Group and it considered this to be a positive step. Potential membership of the External Advisory Group includes representation from industry, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. In addition to contributing to ECAC's strategy and decision making more generally, the External Advisory Group may also be able to resolve some of the issues ECAC is experiencing in meeting QQI's Core Guidelines on governance and management. In doing so, its role and responsibilities will have to be clearly defined from the outset. In addressing the mandatory changes set by the Panel regarding the governance and management of QA, ECAC has developed clear terms of reference for the proposed External Advisory Group, including its function, role, and membership. These have been included in its revised Quality Assurance Manual.

To ensure separation between those developing and approving documentation, ECAC has confirmed that programme documentation will be developed at the level of the ETA Committee and reviewed by the External Advisory Group. In its revised QA Manual, ECAC has also ensured that there is separation in the roles of those involved in awarding and reviewing assessment grades: the relevant assessor will not be a member of the Results Approval Panel but may be consulted by the panel for any necessary clarification.

2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Panel Findings:

The QA Manual submitted to the Panel is tailored to the 11 sections of QQI's Core QA Guidelines. Learner and Staff Handbooks have also been developed to provide relevant information to those audiences.

In reviewing the documentation submitted by ECAC at its original meeting, the Panel was aware that ECAC had substantial experience of working with City & Guilds and meeting its quality assurance requirements. As would be expected, there are areas of commonality in the requirements of both awarding bodies. However, a significant difference is that providers seeking QQI awards need to demonstrate their capacity to develop, assess and govern programmes that are submitted to QQI for validation. Part of the role of the Panel at Stage 1 of the initial access process is to ensure that comprehensive quality assurance procedures are in place that illustrate how the provider will fulfil these roles. In reviewing ECAC's quality assurance policies, particularly with regards to assessment, the Panel identified some gaps in this regard, which were the subject of mandatory changes. In responding to the mandatory changes, ECAC has included in its updated QA Manual a comparison of the assessment requirements of City & Guilds and QQI; detailed information on the operation of the Results Approval Panel; further information on assessment feedback and review; and a description of the roles of the internal verifier and external authenticator. Much of the additional information in this section has been derived from documented QQI guidance on assessment.



The Panel considers that it will be important for ECAC to further contextualise this content prior to its submission of a programme for validation to QQI. At the request of the Panel, ECAC has also augmented its QA Manual to include information on the quality assurance management of short-term extensions, compassionate considerations, conduct and security of assessments (on and offsite), repeat assessments, and the grading system to be applied.

The Panel also considered that the quality assurance culture that was in evidence in its engagement with ECAC and which is central to QQI's concept of quality, was not reflected in ECAC's original QA Manual submission; instead, a compliance approach was emphasised. In its revised QA Manual, ECAC has included a description of its quality culture and how it goes about embedding this culture in all its activities. Finally, whilst ECAC recognises the value of using process maps to illustrate procedures, its experience has been that these are not universally welcomed and so it has avoided their use in its QA Manual. The Panel considers that ECAC may find value in including process maps to support its QA Manual over time.

Specific advice:

- That ECAC considers if the inclusion of process maps in its QA Manual to illustrate some of its documented policies and procedures may prove valuable for the organisation when it comes to their implementation.

Condition:

The Panel places the following condition on its recommendation to the Approvals and Review Committee to approve the quality assurance procedures of ECAC:

- That before ECAC submits a programme to QQI for validation, the assessment content included in ECAC's updated QA Manual, which originated in QQI's guidelines on the quality assurance of assessment, is rewritten and contextualised to illustrate and confirm ECAC's understanding of this material and how it will be implemented.



3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Panel Findings:

ECAC described an admissions process that includes an interview to confirm that the candidate has the appropriate experience to enter the course and to establish that the course is the right one for them. This is followed by the provision of course details to learners, including a summary of learning outcomes and of planned training. Due to the regulated and changing nature of the F Gas industry, it is not possible for ECAC to offer candidates recognition of their prior learning for the purposes of exemptions.

As noted above, QQI's policies for the validation of programmes, specifically, its *Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training* are substantially different to the programmes offered by ECAC leading to City & Guilds awards. However, the experience of ECAC in contributing to the original common awards standards developed by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) in F Gas, will contribute to ECAC's ability to identify and articulate learning outcomes for its special-purpose programmes. In addition, the Managing Director of ECAC has had several years' experience of working in a higher education institution in which programmes were expressed in learning outcomes, and he has received training in this area.

4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Panel Findings:

ECAC is a small and largely family-staffed provider. It confirmed to the Panel that its strategy is not to increase its staff base. It wishes instead to continue to deliver short courses that are appropriate to its scale and expertise. Outside of family members, ECAC employs individuals who are responsible for quality management and external authentication functions.

As one of the purposes of a quality assurance system is to ensure continuity in the context of planned or unexpected events, the Panel considered it important that ECAC would document the role profiles of its staff and include these in its QA manual. Specifically, it discussed with ECAC the specifications that might apply to a trainer, to an administration role, and to a quality management role. ECAC has now documented these roles and included them in its amended QA Manual. Having these specifications in place will ensure that current and future staff members are clear on their roles and responsibilities in implementing the QA Manual.

The Panel noted the induction checklist provided by ECAC for any new staff that may join in the future. The Panel noted that whilst the list included important matters of health and safety and administrative



issues, it did not include reference to familiarising new staff with ECAC's quality assurance systems and documentation. ECAC has now amended the induction checklist to include subjects related to the quality assurance of its programmes: including an introduction to the QA Manual itself.

5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

Panel Findings:

ECAC's Managing Director is also its trainer and assessor. He has substantial experience in training and lecturing in refrigeration, including 17 years in the former Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). It was clear to the Panel that he is an expert in his field and has maintained a passion for his subject-matter, acquired through a history of both working and training in this area for almost 40 years.

ECAC described its industry as fast moving, which has led to it continuously improving and adding to its teaching and learning facilities: its workshops, tools, and equipment. In this regard, ECAC considers itself to be well-resourced to deliver its training. As the Panel was unable to visit ECAC's site due to public health restrictions, the provider submitted additional material to the Panel that included a presentation with photographs of its on-site facilities. ECAC informed the Panel that all its equipment is tested and calibrated annually in addition to being subject to continuous internal inspections. Learners come equipped with their own personal protection equipment.

ECAC also provided the Panel with an overview of the typical reading materials that it has developed to support its training. It has found from experience that hard copy documentation works best with its learners, and it has therefore produced and updated these materials on a continuous basis.

6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

Panel Findings:

The training provided by ECAC is in a high-risk area; both from personal and environmental safety perspectives. Theoretical but largely practical expertise is required to successfully attain the associated learning outcomes. Learners complete both online assessments and practical demonstrations. To date, ECAC's online assessments have been set by City & Guilds. The City & Guilds External Verifier has also observed the ECAC trainer as he has assessed learners demonstrating their skills. Unsuccessful candidates have been supported by ECAC to focus on issues experienced and to retake their assessments.



As referenced in section 2, ECAC has updated its QA Manual to address matters relating to assessment identified by the Panel through mandatory changes. In transitioning from the City & Guilds system, ECAC will need to develop its own assessments and will be moving from a pass/fail assessment standard. When it has developed revised assessments that require individuals to pass both theory and practical elements, ECAC intends seeking the views of external experts on their appropriateness. The proposed External Advisory Group may play a role here.

The Panel also noted in its discussion with ECAC that while it has worked successfully with the External Verifier system in place with City & Guilds, it needed to better familiarise itself with, and more clearly document, the Internal Verifier and External Authenticator roles played in the QQI quality assurance system. In its revised QA Manual, ECAC has elaborated on the specifics of these roles.

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

In its discussions with ECAC, the Panel was clear that the provider is dedicated to its learners and has retained a supportive relationship with many learners long after they have completed their training. As noted above, this relationship begins with an admissions interview that confirms the candidate's experience and ensures that they are applying to the right course for their needs.

The Panel was also impressed with the level of support provided to learners to participate in ECAC's training. This includes, most commonly, support for learners presenting with dyslexia and dyscalculia and for others requiring assistance in using computers to complete online assessments. The supports available to learners are communicated to them when they make their initial enquiries and on their first training day. However, the Panel noted the lack of published information on ECAC's website on supports for prospective learners. ECAC has now provided text to the Panel on learner supports that will be posted to its website. The Panel considers that, in addition, it would be of assistance to learners if relevant forms and documents were provided for them via links in the version of the QA Handbook that is posted to its website. Overall, ECAC described an attentive environment that seeks feedback from learners formally, but also takes the opportunity to speak to individuals one-on-one to support their needs and to provide attention as required.

A complaints procedure is included in ECAC's Learner Handbook. A complaint initially goes to the General Manager with a view to resolving it informally. If a complaint moves to a formal standing, it is also received by the General Manager. Due to its size, this is another area that can be difficult for ECAC to achieve separation of functions. However, ECAC confirmed that to ensure that the subject of the



complaint is not involved in determining its outcome, it includes either the Quality Manager, or another contact who works intermittently with ECAC and has subject-matter expertise, in the complaints process.

Specific Advice:

- That, in the version of the QA Manual posted to its website, ECAC provides links to relevant forms and documents when describing services available to students.

8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT**Panel Findings:**

ECAC is confident in its record keeping processes as it has had to provide data to City & Guilds on learners, assessment outcomes, dates, etc. It has also maintained backup systems, which it feels will lessen any impact of moving from City & Guilds. However, ECAC is aware that it will have to familiarise itself with how QQI's data requirements differ to those of City & Guilds, including how assessment results are uploaded.

ECAC has availed of training in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) through City & Guilds. The Quality Manager is responsible for ensuring that ECAC is compliant with GDPR and remains aligned with its policies and procedures in this area. ECAC retains learner data for 5 years.

ECAC is satisfied that it is currently using its IT systems effectively to store QA documentation and to manage document controls. As ECAC provides hard copy teaching and learning materials, it finds that it doesn't generally need to extend IT supports to its learners.

9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**Panel Findings:**

ECAC is continuously working on and improving its website, which includes details of its certified and uncertified courses. Information on trainers is also available. The website includes a Contact Form for learner and industry enquiries.

ECAC has confirmed that in the event that its QA Manual is approved, and it provides programmes leading to QQI awards, it will publish to its website all award and quality assurance information required by QQI.



10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Panel Findings:

Whilst ECAC doesn't formally work in partnership with other bodies, it is clearly well-connected in its field, working closely with, for instance, the EPA and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. It is also evident that ECAC keeps abreast of sector developments through industry contacts, trade papers, and events.

ECAC explained to the Panel that it has greatly benefited to date from City & Guilds twice-yearly External Verifier visits, during which it has been provided with information on how it has been performing in comparison to other providers offering the same programmes. It is important for ECAC to consider how it can most effectively benchmark itself in the future using data available through QQI. Nationally, there may be some useful comparisons with related provision in the Education and Training Boards sector, but international comparisons may also be possible. The proposed External Advisory Group may be able to assist ECAC in developing a benchmarking strategy.

Specific Advice:

- o That ECAC considers its benchmarking strategy by developing reference points in Ireland and abroad.

11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Panel Findings:

In its application for initial access to QQI validation, ECAC confirmed that it reviews its activities on an ongoing basis. These reviews are described as being largely informal, including discussions with learners and other stakeholders. Where follow-up actions are necessary, they are documented. The ETA committee is described as undertaking self-evaluation on a continuous basis, including reviewing a series of agreed KPI's (as referenced in section 1 above). More substantial reviews were described as taking place on an annual basis using a Plan, Act & Observe, and Reflect cycle. An Annual Report is prepared which details the previous year's activities and plans for the next year. With regards to programmes, the Managing Director has responsibility for overseeing new and updated content on existing programmes. To date, programmes are reviewed every 3 to 5 years, the outcomes of which are considered by the ETA committee.



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In discussion with the Panel, ECAC explained that informal and in-person feedback collection from its learners is more effective, as they are less likely to complete online questionnaires. ECAC places a high value on informal feedback from its learners and this is appropriate and reasonable. However, as ECAC is a small family-run organisation, with essentially one individual providing all training, the Panel considered that further thought could be given to how a learner could provide anonymous feedback to ECAC on their course experience.

Specific Advice:

- That ECAC considers and documents how anonymous feedback from learners can be accommodated.



Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings

The Quality and Capacity Panel was impressed with the evident personal commitment and dedication of East Coast Air Conditioning (ECAC) to its role as a training provider. The Panel also appreciated the forthright engagement of its representatives with the Panel, which led to a clear understanding of the stage of development of ECAC as it moves from City & Guilds to seeking to provide QQI awards. The Panel saw much to recommend ECAC in its approach to its work and to the quality of its provision. It identified some gaps in its quality assurance systems and structures that needed to be addressed prior to its intended progression to seeking validation of its programmes. The Panel identified a series of mandatory changes that were intended to assist ECAC in addressing these gaps and to fully demonstrate its capacity to meet all aspects of QQI's statutory quality assurance guidelines. These mandatory changes were subsequently addressed by ECAC to the satisfaction of the Panel. The Panel is now recommending to the Approvals and Reviews Committee that it approve the quality assurance procedures of ECAC, subject to ECAC confirming that it will address one condition prior to the submission of a programme for validation.

Part 6 Conditions of QA Approval

6.1 Conditions of QA Approval

- That before ECAC submits a programme to QQI for validation, the assessment content included in ECAC's updated QA Manual, which originated in QQI's guidelines on the quality assurance of assessment, is rewritten and contextualised to illustrate and confirm ECAC's understanding of this material and how it will be implemented.

Part 7 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice

The mandatory changes listed below were recommended by the panel and approved by QQI's Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC) following the first panel meeting in March 2021. Following the revised submission made by ECAC and subsequent reevaluation in September 2021, the panel is satisfied that all have now been addressed.

7.1 Mandatory Changes

- That clear terms of reference are established for the proposed External Advisory Group, that include its function, role, and membership.
- That the membership of the ETA is changed to ensure that the Managing Director is not involved in all levels of decision making around quality.
- That the governance of ECAC's programmes ensures separation between those developing and approving documentation.
- That there is clearly documented separation of roles for those involved in awarding and



reviewing assessment grades.

- That ECAC's QA Manual is reviewed, and opportunities are taken to reflect the quality culture of ECAC that was described to the Panel. In doing so, that ECAC expands on its treatment of culture in its QA Manual (section 1.3) and with reference to the description of culture in the Core Statutory QA Guidelines of QQI (pp.8-9).
- That ECAC develops a more comprehensive understanding of the potential differences between City & Guilds and QQI, with particular focus on assessment changes that will be required. This should be reflected in a revised / updated section on assessment in the QA Manual, which fully reflects the QQI requirements in this area.
- That ECAC's QA Manual is augmented to include information on the quality assurance management of short-term extensions, compassionate considerations, conduct and security of assessments (on and off site), repeat assessments, and the grading system to be applied.
- That role specifications are devised for ECAC's key management and quality roles. Specifically, a specification for a trainer, for an administration role, and for a quality management role.
- That ECAC's staff induction checklist includes familiarisation of any new staff with academic and quality policies.
- That the roles of the Internal Verifier and External Authenticator, which are key to the quality assurance of programmes leading to QQI awards, are clearly understood, defined, and articulated in ECAC's Quality Assurance Manual.
- That the range and nature of supports provided by ECAC to its learners is publicised on its website for the information of prospective candidates.

7.1 Specific Advice – (September 2021)

- That ECAC considers if the inclusion of process maps in its QA Manual to illustrate some of its documented policies and procedures may prove valuable for the organisation when it comes to their implementation.
- That, in the version of the QA Manual posted to its website, ECAC provides links to relevant forms and documents when describing services available to students.
- That ECAC considers its benchmarking strategy by developing reference points in Ireland and abroad.
- That ECAC considers and documents how anonymous feedback from learners can be accommodated.



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Part 8 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider

Not applicable.

| NFQ Level(s) – min and max | Award Class(es) | Discipline areas |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 5 | Special Purpose | Fgas Refrigerants 5S0108 |
| | | |
| | | |
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Part 9 Approval by Chair of the Panel

This report of the Quality and Capacity Panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the recommendation to approve the QA procedures of East Coast Air Conditioning, subject to the provider confirming that it will address one condition prior to the submission of a programme for validation as specified in Section 6.1.

Name:

Dr Annie Doona_

Date: 5 October 2021



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

Material provided to support initial application to the Panel:

- Initial Access to Validation application details, including:
 - The completed application form
 - Company information
 - Financial information
- The East Coast Air Conditioning Quality Assurance Manual
- Staff and Learner Handbooks
- Organisational Chart and staff profiles
- Additional information was provided by ECAC in response to questions posed by the Panel in advance of the event, these related to:
 - ECAC's Governance System, particularly externality and separation of academic and commercial decision making.
 - Induction and training for staff.
 - Implications for QA of programme delivery and assessment arising from the transition from City & Guilds to QQI.
 - Programme resourcing.
 - Supports for learners.

Material provided to support resubmission to the Panel:

- Initial Access to Validation application form
- Amended Quality Assurance Manual (QAM)
- Induction checklist
- Summary of responses to mandatory changes and page references to QAM



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

| Name | Role/Position |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| John Murphy | Managing Director / Trainer |
| Therese Murphy | General Manager/Administration |
| Jim Seward | Quality Manager |

Appendix: Provider response to the Initial Access to Validation Panel Report



Refrigeration & HVAC Training & Consultancy

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QQI
27 Denzille Ln
Dublin,
D02 P266

18 October 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are delighted that the panel is recommending that QQI approve our QA procedures subject to recommended conditions of QA approval and specific advice set out in the report.

We have completed a full accuracy check of the attached report.
We have no factual inaccuracies to report.

We are happy with the contents of report and would like to thank the panel for their work on the process. We accept the recommendations of the panel.

Yours sincerely
John Murphy
Director