



QFI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QFI Awards-Further Education and Training

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

Registered Business/Trading Name:	Gills Driving School
Address:	Church Road, Ballina, Co Mayo
Date of Application:	07 May 2015
Date of resubmission of application:	15 June 2015
Date of evaluation:	02 July 2015
Date of site visit (if applicable):	10 July 2015
Date of recommendation to the Approvals and Reviews Committee:	09 September 2015



1.2 Profile of applicant provider

The Gill Group was established in Ballina, Co. Mayo and is a family run organisation that has been in operation for over 30 years. It comprises of five companies providing a diverse range of services:

- Gills Driving School was established in 1971 and offers a range of training in all categories of vehicles, in Ballina and various centres around Ireland.
- Brooklands Gas Ltd is an LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) bottling and distribution operation covering the west of Ireland.
- Brooklands Oil Ltd, is a home heating/motor vehicle, fuel distribution company, covering the west of Ireland.
- Brooklands Bedding Ltd is a baled wood shavings distribution company operating nationwide.
- Tiernan Gill Equine Services.

Gills Driving School is the legal entity that has applied to QQI for access to initial programme validation. One of the largest fleet trainers in the country for all categories of vehicle licence acquisition, Gills Driving School is approved by the:

- Road Safety Authority (RSA) in Ireland to present driver training and driver CPC training at a range of centres throughout Ireland.
- International Road Transport Union (IRU) certified to present the IRU Safe Loading & Cargo Securing Programme
- Road Transport Industry Training Board (RTITB UK) certified to present Reach & Counter Balance Forklift Training.
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine approved to present the Certificate in Equine Transport for Type 1 & Type 2 Authorisation.

Gills Driving School considers that providing accredited training in a range of related areas to the programmes it currently provides is a necessary step for the next phase of its business development.

1.3 Proposed education and training provision

Gills Driving School initially proposed to provide programmes leading to Special Purpose and Minor awards at NFQ Level 5 in 5N0731 Hand Held Pesticide Application, 5N1797 Boom Sprayer Pesticide Application and 5N2466 Handling & Distribution of Pesticides. The focus of these awards relates directly to the



Sustainable Use Directive (SUD) requiring all users of pesticides to register as 'Professional Users' with the Department of Agriculture and the Marine by November 2015. The qualifying requirement for registration is the achievement of the relevant QQI award or equivalent.

QQI advised Gills Driving School to consider its proposed provision in the longer term and in the context of its business development plans for the next three to five years. Subsequently, Gills Driving School submitted a revised list of proposed awards that they consider appropriate for them as an established training provider, to consider offering.

In addition to the pesticide related awards, Gills Driving School proposes to offer programmes leading to the following QQI awards.

Special Purpose Awards

- 5S5833 **Warehousing Operations**
- 6S0242 **Manual Handling Instruction**
- 6S0912 **Construction Stage Health and Safety Co-ordination**

Minor awards

- 5N1742 **Tractor Operations**
- 5N1752 **All Terrain Vehicle Operation**
- 5N1451 **Health and Safety Representation**
- 5N1794 **Health and Safety in the Workplace**
- 5N1782 **Safety Management**
- 5N1207 **Occupational First Aid**

Gills Driving School has also indicated an ambition to offer a major award in Horsemanship, in three to five years' time. QQI confirmed that the capacity of Gills Driving School to offer this major award will be evaluated at that time.



Part 2 The Quality and Capacity Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
Naomi Jackson	Chair	Hibernia College
Joan Hennessy	QA in Further Education and Training	SOLAS
Sheila Macken	Subject Matter Expertise in pesticide application	Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine
Anne Higgins	QA in Further Education and Training	Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board.
Ciaran McCurtin*	Learner Representative Skillnets	Schmitt ECS
* Unable to attend on date of panel meeting		
Colette Harrison	Secretary	QQI
QQI Staff		
Angela Lambkin	Observer, Panel Meeting	QQI
Walter Balfe	Site visit	QQI

Part 3 Findings of the Panel

3.1 Summary Findings

The Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel's (panel) role is to evaluate the capacity of Gills Driving School to provide quality education and training to learners in the context of the education and training provision proposed. Core to this consideration, the panel is



required to evaluate the draft quality assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by Gills Driving School.

The panel reviewed the documentation presented by Gills Driving School and documentation submitted by QQI. Annex 1 lists the staff of Gills Driving School who the panel met during the evaluation process. The panel met representatives of Gills Driving School and considered their responses made during the course of the evaluation meeting. Annex 2 lists the documentation.

Following the evaluation meeting, the panel decided that a site visit to Gills Driving School's premises was appropriate and requested that members of QQI undertake the visit to confirm that Gills Driving School's premises, facilities and resources detailed in the documentation and presentation are in place. The site visit took place on 10 July 2015 and confirmed this was the case and that they were appropriate to Gills Driving School's application and fit for purpose.

The panel is satisfied that Gills Driving School has demonstrated its capacity to provide quality education and training to learners leading to the Special Purpose and Minor awards at Levels 4 to 6 of the NFQ as listed in para 1.3.

Gills Driving School has demonstrated, during its presentation to the panel, ownership and understanding of its quality system. However, the panel advises that the understanding of QQI's specific requirements e.g. quality assuring learner assessment for the implementation of quality assurance, needs further attention by Gills Driving School's staff to ensure effective engagement with all QQI processes.

The panel is satisfied that the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by Gills Driving School demonstrates a potentially effective quality management system fit for the purposes of education and training as outlined above. The panel's condition that Gills Driving School review its QA procedures to ensure that all procedures map to the Quality Assurance Guidelines and Criteria for Further Education and Training, will ensure that the QA system implemented by Gills Driving School will be appropriate to the size of the organisation and the provision it is proposing.

3.2 Recommendation of the panel

The panel recommends that the Approvals and Review Committee of QQI approves the proposed draft Quality Assurance procedures of Gills Driving School. As a result of this



recommendation, Gills Driving School will be permitted to progress to Stage 2 of the initial validation process.

This is subject to QQI confirming that the conditions imposed by the panel in this report are met by Gills Driving School prior to submitting programmes for validation.

Part 4 Detailed findings - Evaluation of the capacity of the applicant to provide quality education and training to learners

4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

4.1.1(a) Criterion

Is the applicant an established legal entity who has education and/or training as a principal function?

4.1.1(b) Finding

Gills Driving School is an established legal entity. It is a partnership registered in 2013 with two named partners (CRO 505779). The Managing Director of Gills Driving School is a partner.

4.1.2(a) Criterion

Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?

4.1.2(b) Finding

Gills Driving School is a partnership registered in Ireland and operates from Ballina, Co Mayo. This is its primary centre of operations and it provides its current range of driving related training programmes from its training facility there and in other training centres around Ireland.

4.1.3(a) Criterion

Are all dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?

**4.1.3(b) Finding**

Gills Driving School, a partnership, is part of The Gill Group of companies comprising four limited companies with the same directors in each company and a sole trader. The information provided by Gills Driving School clearly specifies the relationships in The Gill Group.

4.1.4(a) Criterion

Are all third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?

4.1.4(b) Finding

Gills Driving School is an approved training centre of the RSA and RTITB UK. It is also approved to offer the International Road Transport Union (IRU) programme on safe handling of loads and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine equine transport courses. These relationships are directly relevant and important to Gills Driving School's current provision. They are compatible with their proposed provision of QQI awards.

Gills Driving School has a third party relationship with Chevron Training and Recruitment who access their facilities in Ballina for their own programmes.

4.1.5(a) Criterion

Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?

4.1.5(b) Finding

Gills Driving School, in making the required statutory declaration has certified that it is compliant with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements applicable to the provision of education and training in Ireland, in particular all employment, health and safety, equality, data protection, and financial regulatory requirements insofar as same are applicable to Gills Driving School's operations.

**4.1.6(a) Criterion**

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.

4.1.6(b) Finding

The good standing of Gills Driving School with the bodies it provides training for is confirmed by the listing of Gills Driving School as accredited providers on the websites of the relevant bodies' web sites.

4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:**4.2.1(a) Criterion**

Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?

4.2.1(b) Finding

The panel is satisfied that Gills Driving School has sufficient resources and at this time is in good financial standing. It satisfied this requirement by providing details of the development of the business since its establishment in 1971, recent (August 2014) financial accounts and details of staff and physical resources developed over the years of its business development.

4.2.2(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?

4.2.2(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has developed a substantial business presence in driver and related training. In assessing its next stage of development, it considers that seeking national accreditation for programmes in specific areas related to their current provision with proven demand is the next step in its development.



During discussions with the panel, Gills Driving School provided projections for learner numbers for the pesticide spraying and distribution programmes based on the demand from its existing client base. This, the national demand for these programmes and the physical resources available to the school, support the business case for sustainable provision. The proposed provision of programmes in tractor operations, warehousing and health and safety is also relevant to Gills Driving School's current training provision and client base.

4.2.3(a) Criterion

Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?

4.2.3(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has not implemented its planned governance and decision making structure in relation to quality assurance. The panel considers that the proposed structure is too complex for the size of the organisation. The proposed structure requires revision and simplification to reflect actual practices and be workable for the staff of Gills Driving School. A simpler structure should also maximise the experience and knowledge of the staff who currently manage existing training provision and processes.

4.2.4(a) Criterion

Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?

4.2.4(b) Finding

Gills Driving School, through the requirements of other accrediting bodies, has the experience and the necessary systems in place to provide required information to QQI. As part of the supporting documentation submitted to QQI, it provided a range of statistical reports (completion rates, results profile) confirming a capacity to comply with QQI's information requirements. The school has six experienced administrative staff and appropriate technical resources in place.



4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:

4.3.1(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?

4.3.1(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has experience and a track record in providing training programmes in driving and related areas. It has developed its range of programmes to meet demand from client companies and specific legislative requirements.

The school recognises that providing programmes leading to QQI awards places additional responsibilities in the areas of programme design and development and learner assessment on the designated staff.

The panel recommends that staff are provided with an opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of the qualifications system: awards, learning outcomes, programme design, development and internal approval of programmes and fair and consistent assessment processes.

4.3.2(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?

4.3.2(b) Finding

Gills Driving School employs 6 training staff and contracts 18 trainers to deliver its current range of driving related programmes. It sets specific qualifications for its staff in this area, ensuring that all staff have recognised qualifications in training in their specialist field. In its documentation and in the presentation to the panel, Gills Driving School confirmed that the policy of ensuring that appropriately qualified training staff will develop and deliver the proposed programmes leading to QQI awards.

Both the Programme Manager and Course Manager are permanent employees with ten and five years' experience respectively of the management of training programmes. A new staff member has been



employed to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the quality management system and ensure compliance with QQI's requirements.

The panel acknowledge Gills Driving School's commitment to CPD and mentoring for its staff.

4.3.3(a) Criterion

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)?

4.3.3(b) Finding

The standard conditions for validation specified in the Act include co-operation with and assistance to QQI in the performances of its functions, including the provision of such information required by QQI, the establishment of procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners and provisions for the protection of enrolled learners.

From the documentation submitted and the presentation made by Gills Driving School, the panel considers that its quality assurance system is capable of supporting the standard conditions for validation. This determination will be confirmed during the programme validation stage of this process.

4.3.4(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?

4.3.4(b) Finding

Gills Driving School provided details of its training facilities and the necessary equipment needed to deliver the awards it is proposing. A site visit undertaken by QQI executive confirms the information provided by Gills Driving School in its submission and during the evaluation meeting. The building, facilities and equipment are fit for purpose.

**4.3.5(a) Criterion**

Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?

4.3.5(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has appropriate access arrangements in place for its proposed provision. The panel discussed the challenges of providing accredited training when verbal and literacy skills are an issue. Gills Driving School outlined the supports it currently has available for such learners.

A determination on appropriate access to programmes will be made during the programme validation stage of this process.

The panel acknowledged that there are limited transfer and progression opportunities available to learners from the programmes to be provided.

4.3.6(a) Criterion

Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?

4.3.6(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has significant experience in delivering programmes that are externally assessed by the body accrediting the programme. The school understands that providers offering programmes leading to QQI awards are fully responsible for the fair and consistent assessment of learners.

In the documentation presented, the panel noted some confusion arising from the use of HE QA Guidelines and Criteria (para 5.1b refers) in the development of quality policies and procedures.

The school needs to further develop its understanding of the FET assessment and authentication processes including assignment briefs, consistency of grading, internal verification and external authentication/examining process and results approval as set out in the FET Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines (Revised 2013).



The Managing Director of Gills Driving School confirmed to the panel that additional expert resources would be put in place to ensure that the transition to internal assessment and related processes is implemented appropriately.

4.3.7(a) Criterion

Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?

4.3.7(b) Finding

This policy does not apply to Gills Driving School due to the short duration of the programmes they are proposing to offer.

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

The panel is satisfied that Gills Driving School has proven its capacity to provide quality programmes leading to the proposed NFQ Level 4 to NFQ Level 6 Special Purpose and minor awards (non-major) in agriculture, warehousing and health and safety to learners, in an adequately resourced, suitable environment.

Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by Gills Driving School**5.1(a) Criterion**

The quality system is comprehensive, containing policies and procedures for all relevant areas set out in the QA Guidelines and Criteria for Further education and Training.

5.1(b) Finding

The documentation submitted by Gills Driving School is comprehensive, containing the relevant policies and procedures. The panel considers that the format of Gills Driving School's QA manual and QA policies and procedures presents a more complicated view of the quality management system that it is planning to implement.



The QA manual would be improved by a revision of its format following mapping to the FET QA Guidelines and Criteria and to reflect actual practice on the ground. This would ensure it is easily understood by any new member of staff. This would make the QA manual a more accurate reflection of the knowledge, understanding and application of the policies and procedures as discussed with the panel.

5.2(a) Criterion

Gills Driving School has a governance structure capable of overseeing the effective implementation of its quality system

5.2(b) Finding

The panel considers that the proposed structure is too complex for the size of the organisation. The proposed structure requires revision and simplification to reflect actual practices in Gills Driving School and to be workable for its staff (para 4.2.3 refers)

5.3(a) Criterion

Gills Driving School policies are required to demonstrate a full knowledge of legislative obligations on providers arising from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012).

5.3(b) Finding

The policies submitted by Gills Driving School demonstrate its understanding of the legislative obligations of providers who offer programmes leading to QQI awards.

5.4(a) Criterion

The system for Internal Monitoring is credible i.e. it identifies

- *who is responsible*
- *mode(s) of operation*
- *frequency*
- *indicator(s)/measures of effectiveness*

**5.4(b) Finding**

Gills Driving School, as a small organisation, requires its staff to undertake a varied number of roles, which is understandable. The Managing Director is required to oversee the proposed internal monitoring activities. This is both onerous and inappropriate and should be reconsidered when the proposed structure is reviewed (para 4.2.3 refers).

The panel is of the view that Gills Driving School's QA procedures for internal/self-review and monitoring, require further thinking and refinement. The model of QA, as presented, is designed based on the higher education guidelines and associated criteria. Given that the school is providing further education and training programmes, a reorientation of QA using the appropriate further education and training QA guidelines will result in a more appropriate and practical set of procedures to support the school's proposed provision.

The proposed structures for internal programmatic review and coordination are overly complex and should be revisited. Some of the activities could be better allocated to the Programme and Course Managers as they should be seen as part of the day-to-day operational activities.

There is a need to develop the knowledge and experience of key personnel in relation to implementation of quality assurance, particularly in regards to internal monitoring and review. It is likely that support and mentoring will be needed in the initial years of programme planning, delivery and the review of provision in the light of evidence from systematic and structured monitoring of the quality of provision.

5.5(a) Criterion

The procedures for Assessment of Learners have the capacity to ensure that assessment as carried out will be fair, consistent and fit for purpose.

5.5(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has extensive experience in the delivery of programmes which are externally assessed by the accrediting body e.g. RSA. The requirement to ensure fair and consistent assessment is a provider responsibility. As QQI has no role in the assessment processes of any provider, this is an area requiring mentoring and support. In discussions with



the panel, the Managing Director committed to ensuring that appropriate expertise would be put in place prior to the commencement of programme delivery.

The assessment procedures in the QA Manual are set out in line with the higher education and training model and will need to be revised as this provider is to operate in the FET sector and it would be expected that the assessment procedures would be fully aligned with FET QA guidelines for assessment. This will ensure that the assessment procedures are fair and consistent and reflect more fully the understanding of full provider ownership of these policies and procedures i.e. removal of any reference to the role of QQI in such matters.

5.6(a) Criterion

The policy for Protection of Enrolled learners clearly states the provider's obligations in this area.

5.6(b) Finding

This policy does not apply to Gills Driving School due to the short duration of the programmes they are proposing to offer.

5.7(a) Criterion

The system for Self-Evaluation and Improvement is credible and has the potential to support quality provision in the provider.

5.7(b) Finding

Gills Driving School has used various mechanisms of self-evaluation, on an informal basis, to improve and develop its delivery of programmes.

The panel identified that the self-evaluation model proposed by Gills Driving School is based on the Higher Education QA Guidelines and Criteria and is not appropriate or necessary for an organisation the size of Gills Driving School. The proposed system of self-evaluation requires review to ensure it is capable of leading to improvement in the training and related services provided by Gills Driving School.

**5.8(a) Criterion**

There is evidence of involvement of all significant stakeholders (learners, staff, independent evaluator, external stakeholders) in the process of self-evaluation.

5.8(b) Finding

There is evidence that Gills Driving School understands the requirements for all stakeholders to be involved in its self-evaluation processes. The school presented supporting documentation from stakeholders and demonstrated how it maintains effective communications with them. The school is developing to enable it to use this feedback to inform its self-evaluation processes.

5.9(a) Criterion

The presentation to the panel demonstrates a full ownership and understanding of the quality system by Gills Driving School management.

5.9(b) Finding

The presentation made to the panel by Gills Driving School assured the panel that the Managing Director and staff implement a range of quality principles and processes that have contributed to the success of the business to date. The panel noted the Managing Director's commitment to appropriately resource and ensure the implementation of an appropriate QA system.

The panel recommends that Gills Driving School networks with other established providers that offer accredited education and training as this will widen their understanding of the effective quality assurance systems in this sector.

5.10(a) Criterion

The procedures are capable of being effectively monitored by the provider and/or by QQI.



5.10(b) Finding

The procedures set out in the quality assurance manual are capable of being effectively monitored by the provider and QQI. Gills Driving School proposes regular monitoring of its activities and this reflects the short-term nature of its proposed programmes. However, the complex committee structure and the involvement of the Managing Director in the monitoring activity requires review (para 4.2.3 refers).

The panel considers that clarifying the role of the Academic and Quality Manager, Programme and Course Managers in relation to internal monitoring and reducing the over reliance on the Managing Director, will strengthen internal monitoring in the school.

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall finding

The panel is satisfied that the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by Gills Driving School demonstrates a potentially effective quality management system fit for the purposes of education and training programmes leading to Special Purpose and minor (non-major) NFQ Level 4 to NFQ Level 6 awards.

The conditions and recommendations made by the panel will strengthen the procedures to support the implementation of an effective, appropriate quality management system by Gills Driving School.

Part 6 Conditions and Recommendations

6.1 Conditions

The panel, at the conclusion of the evaluation process, has set a number of conditions for Gills Driving School. These conditions must be met to the satisfaction of QQI prior to the commencement of Stage 2 of the access to initial programme validation process: submission of programmes for validation.

Part 4 - Evaluation of the capacity of Gills Driving School to provide quality education and training to learners



4.2 *Resource, governance and structural requirements:*

- Revise the proposed governance structure to simplify it to ensure that it is practical and workable for the staff of Gills Driving School (para 4.2.3).

4.3 *Programme development and provision requirements:*

- Address the weakness identified in its understanding of the FET assessment and authentication processes including assignment briefs, consistency of grading, internal verification and external authentication/examining process and results approval, as set out in the FET Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines (Revised 2013) (para 4.3.6).

Part 5 - Evaluation of draft QA Procedures

- Revise the QA manual format, mapping the policies and procedures to the FET QA Guidelines and Criteria (para 5.1).
- Review the QA procedures for internal/self-review and monitoring to reflect more accurately the FET Quality Assurance Guidelines and Criteria (para 5.4)
- Revise the assessment procedures in the QA Manual to ensure that these procedures fully aligned with FET QA guidelines for assessment (Revised 2013) (para 5.5).
- Revise the QA procedures for internal/self-review and monitoring to ensure it is capable of leading to improvement in the training and related services provided by Gills Driving School (para 5.7).
- Clarify the roles of the Academic and Quality Manager, Programme Manager and Course Manager to ensure that the QA procedures can be appropriately monitored (para 5.9).

It is a standard condition of the initial access to programme validation process that providers who have their draft QA procedures agreed by QQI must apply to validate the proposed programmes within six months of their approval. This condition applies to Gills Driving School.



6.2 Recommendations

The panel, at the conclusion of the evaluation process, makes the following recommendations for improvement to Gills Driving School.

- Provide staff with an opportunity to develop its knowledge and understanding of the qualifications system: awards, learning outcomes, programme design, development and internal approval of programmes (para 4.3.1).
- Provide staff with the opportunity to develop its knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning (para 4.3.6)
- Network with other established providers who offer accredited education and training (para 5.9).

Part 7 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 draft Quality Assurance Procedures of Gills Driving School and approve its progression to Stage 2 of the initial programme validation process.

Name:


Naomi Jackson, Chair

Date:

6 August 2015



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

- Applicants completed application form, including the statutory declaration and supporting documentation.
- Applicant's self-assessment against the criteria for access to initial validation.
- Provider draft QA procedures and supporting documentation.
- QQI review of Gills Driving School Public Information.
- QQI report of site visit dated 10 July 2015.

Annex 2: Gills Driving School staff met in the course of the Evaluation

Name	Role/Position
Tiernan Gill	Managing Director
Patrick Kelly	Quality & Academic Manager
Pauline Campbell	Programme Manager
Clare McGrath	Course Manager