NAPD-FE response to the QQI White Paper on Blended Learning

NAPD-FE welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on this White Paper.

(1)   There needs to be clarification from QQI as to what exactly blended learning is? For example what quantity of the course delivery is not face to face, is using YouTube clips deemed blended learning? How many hours is deems a course to be categorized as blended learning.

(2)   Currently within FET the possibility of developing blended learning courses i.e. such as those provided by eCollege or private providers such as Chevron Training, is not achievable due to the lack of resources as outlined in the guidelines. While this is not a QQI issue it really limits the provider market for blended learning courses. This will create a monopoly or cartel situation which means that blended learning courses will not be accessible to all. This surely is contrary to government policy and QQI's own policy on ATP.

(3)   The validation and evaluation of blended learning courses will prove problematic for state FET providers due to lack of experts in the area.

(4)   Validation of new programmes calls for subject specific qualifications. While ICT creation of programme content should not be an issue, the creation of subject related ICT content will.

(5)   As referenced in the document the key issues of ICT security and GRDP are serious issues. ETB's are not resourced to achieve best practice in this area. QQI should enforce stringent validation protocols for these two areas.

(6)   These statutory guidelines do not distinguish between part-time or full-time blended learning courses. For private providers the determination to run a blended learning course is based on profit. This dictates course length and course rotation. This will disadvantage state providers who are bound by specific funding models that do not relate to the provision of off-site education and training i.e. in order to receive recognition and funding for each student they must be attending on a daily basis.