QQI Guidelines and Criteria for Proposing the Development of New Award Standards or Review of Existing Ones

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# Context

QQI is a state agency under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills. It was established in November 2012 by an amalgamation of four bodies: the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Quality Board. QQI has assumed all the functions of those bodies. QQI has a broad remit across education and training in Ireland. It has a key role in the qualifications system through its custodianship of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Further Education and Training Awards Council and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council had essentially suspended new standards development owing to the amalgamation project.

QQI will establish the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by QQI itself or by providers of education and training programmes to which it has delegated authority to make awards.

QQI is currently developing awards standards (including CAS awards specifications). Higher priority work is being tackled first.

QQI now invites applications for new standards development. In the first instance proponents will be requested to make an outline proposal and this will be published.

This guideline outlines the criteria to be addressed when making proposals.

# New Award Standards Development Proposals

## Description of the Requirement (to be published on QQI’s website along with the proponent’s identity)

1. What would the education and training award standard(s) be called?
2. What would be the field of education and training (use the ISCED code)?
3. What would the purposes of the award(s) be?
4. Which (if any) professional, statutory, public-funding or regulatory interests might be involved or affected?
5. Does a relevant occupational standard exist?
6. What relevant international work on learning outcomes or standards is underway in the sector, if any?
7. What NFQ award-type(s) and classes(s) and Level(s) are proposed?
8. Who has been consulted about this initiative and what have they said?
9. Has consideration been given to any relevant EGFSN publications?
10. What is the educational profile of the group targeted by this qualification?
11. What are the access requirements and the progression routes afforded by this qualification?

## Self-assessment against the Prioritisation Criteria (below) to be submitted in writing by the proponent

1. What are the three closest existing awards standards and why are these inadequate for the new requirement?
2. What are the three closest qualifications (in Ireland) and why are these inadequate for the new requirement? Note that qualifications that are outside the NFQ can be aligned with it (and thereby recognised within the NFQ).
3. What are the three closest programmes of education and training (whether or not they lead to nationally standardised NFQ awards) and why are these inadequate for the new requirement?
4. Where does the expertise to develop the proposed award reside? Are these experts likely to be available to support the work of standards development?
5. Who will fund and provide the programmes of education and training that would lead to this award(s)?
6. Conservatively estimate how many enrolments and awards would be made annually for each of the first five years?
7. Has a systematic needs (cost versus benefit) analysis been completed? What did it conclude concerning national, regional or local needs over each of the first five years?
8. Is there a viable business plan for provision of programmes of education and training that would lead to this qualification?

## Prioritisation Process

A list of proposal descriptions will be maintained and be published along with the proponent’s identity.

Development work will be scheduled on the basis of need and priority. Not all proposals can be expected to achieve sufficient priority to warrant development. More details on the prioritisation process will be published soon.

A list of current awards standards development work will be maintained and published. However, placement on the list is not a guarantee that a national award standard will result.

## Award Standards Development Process

The work on the development of new standards will be undertaken by an appointed expert group with current knowledge of the discipline(s) concerned, pedagogical expertise and an understanding of learner and employer perspectives.

### Terms of References

Terms of reference will be established for each expert group and published by QQI.

### Consultation

All draft awards standards will be published for public observations prior to finalisation.

# Awards Standards Review Proposals

Proposals for the review of existing awards standards (including CAS specifications) are invited and will be published along with the proponent’s identity. Review work will also be planned to ensure the highest priority work is tackled first. Proposals to review existing published award standards will address the following:

1. Name of the Award Standard to be Reviewed
2. Reasoned case for prioritising a review

## Application Process

Proposals for new award standards should be submitted by email to [framework.standards@qqi.ie](mailto:framework.standards@qqi.ie) in line with the guidelines on criteria to be addressed. Responses to Description of the Requirement and Self-assessment against the Prioritisation Criteria at 2.1 and 2.2 above should be in the form of a template developed by the proposer to respond to each of the criteria outlined.

Proposals for the review of existing awards standards should include the Name of the Award Standard to be reviewed and a reasoned case for prioritising a review.

All proposals should include contact details including:  
- Name of the proposer, indicating if the proposal is from an organisation/college/group/individual..  
- Contact details (telephone and email)

# Frequently Asked Questions concerning CAS Awards Specifications

## No deactivation date for locally devised modules (LDMs)?

If there has been no certification since 2011 the deactivation date of an LDM will be set to December 2013 except where the LDM is named in the structure of a legacy NCVA major in which case the LDM will deactivate on the same date as the major award. The final date for deactivation of all old awards will be 12 December 2014

## Minor award has not been mapped to CAS – when will it be replaced?

Where minor awards are not mapped to CAS it/they will be dealt with based on need and demand. With the exception of the Information Technology (IT) awards and awards that are dependent on IT components, the migration to CAS process will be completed in October 2013. The IT awards will be published in December 2013. Where locally devised modules or other awards have not been replaced by a CAS award, they will not be mapped. However learners may still carry forward existing minor awards (components) as exemptions towards new common major and special purpose awards, where they are appropriate, until December 2015

## What is the final date for carrying forward Exemptions towards CAS awards?

Learners may carry forward existing minor awards (components) as exemptions towards new common major and special purpose awards, where they are appropriate, until December 2015.

## Applications for New Standards Development?

The Further Education and Training Awards Council suspended new standards development in September 2011 owing to the impending amalgamation. QQI is currently developing award standards where there is an urgent need and invites applications for new standards development in line with these guidelines on criteria to be addressed when making proposals.