



Public consultation on exchequer-employer investment mechanism for higher education (HE) and further education and training (FET)

Response from QQI - 11 April 2017

QQI's work in relation to qualifications and to quality assurance evidences the need for increased and sustained investment in FET and HE in the long-term. This informs our comments below and, in the broader context, our advice on the review of the funding allocation model for higher education.

QQI's reports on *Quality in an Era of diminishing resources* (2017) and *Quality within the Universities, RCSI and DIT, 2016* (2017)¹ emphasise the negative cumulative effect that reductions in public funding, controls on employment and the additional workload associated with institutional mergers and clustering have. In the absence of additional funding to support these activities, there is a danger that the quality assurance system and quality itself will suffer.

The question of whether an increased employer contribution will be used for general purposes or be directly linked to skills formation needs to be considered. Employers and others may seek specific assurances about the quality of public-private investment in skills – for example, should it be tied to the quality markers of: certification by recognised bodies; programmes that are accredited by the relevant national bodies and qualifications that are recognised in the National framework of Qualifications (NFQ)?

Our work on new apprenticeships² shows the need for an integrated funding model to support partnerships of employers, further education and training and higher education providers to design, govern and deliver many of the new apprenticeships from NFQ Levels 5 and upwards. Support is also needed for enterprise-led development of occupational standards, curricula and qualifications development, the provision of education and training and the assessment of learning. Perhaps employers that make such investments could draw down from the NTF to support such work or NTF funds could be earmarked to build capacity for such partnerships.

¹[http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Quality%20in%20an%20Era%20of%20Diminishing%20Resources%20Report%20\(FINAL%20March%202016\).pdf](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Quality%20in%20an%20Era%20of%20Diminishing%20Resources%20Report%20(FINAL%20March%202016).pdf) and

<http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/QUALITY%20WITHIN%20THE%20UNIVERSITIES%20RCSI%20AND%20DIT%202016.pdf>

² QQI, guidelines for providers on the quality assurance of apprenticeship programmes, 2016

<http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Apprenticeship%20Programmes%20QAG%20Topic-Specific.pdf>