



## Reengagement Panel Report

### Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

#### Part 1 Details of provider

##### 1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	IBEC/Retail Ireland Skillnet
Address:	84/86 Lower Baggott Street, Dublin 2; CoLab, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Port Road, Letterkenny, Donegal
Date of Application:	January 31, 2019
Date of resubmission of application:	
Date of evaluation:	
Date of site visit (if applicable):	June 17, 2019
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	Sept 12, 2019



## **1.2 Profile of provider**

Retail Ireland Skillnet (RIS) has been a provider of retail education and training programmes since 2000. RIS funding is administrated through Skillnets, the body responsible for the promotion and facilitation of training and upskilling in Ireland. RIS is an Ibec managed Skillnet, and is governed by both Ibec and Skillnet Ireland. The RIS mission entails providing effective work-based training and education programmes that work for people in the retail sector.

RIS has been a QQI/FETAC approved provider since 2003. RIS's current scope of approved quality assurance is for programmes in the retail sector leading to awards at Level 5 and Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). RIS provides a range of modules at Level 5, leading to a full qualification in Retail Practice 5M2105. The modules are designed for operational level employees working in the retail sector.

RIS certified an average of 711 learners per year over the last twelve years. Learners undertake training and education programmes designed by RIS for individuals working in the retail sector, which lead to minor awards. RIS also provide non-certified training in a number of areas including digital marketing, sales, customer service and supervision.

All RIS training and education programmes are designed in consultation with the Retail Ireland Steering Group, the Consortium Steering Group and the Programme Boards. RIS are industry-led and have senior representatives from some of Ireland's leading retail organisations including Aldi, Easons, Mothercare, BWG, Woodies, Carraig Donn, Kilkenny Group, O'Briens Wine and Aramark contributing to the design and development of programmes. RIS has strong linkages with tutors, academic representatives, work-based learning specialists and external experts.



<b>Part 2 Panel Membership</b>		
Name	Role of Panel Member	Organisation
Mr. John Vickery	Chair	Former Registrar, Institute of Technology Tallaght
Dr. Catherine Peck	Secretary	Independent Education Consultant
Ms. Siobhan Magner	Education Expert	National Programme Manager Sales Apprenticeship, Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB
Mr. Tony Dalton	Education Expert	Further Education Director, Laois Offaly ETB
Mr. Eric Aldewereld	Education Expert	International Consultant Higher Education
Ms. Linda Ward	Subject Matter Expert	Principal of Retail Renewal with many years' experience in the retail industry at a senior level with various companies such as Marks and Spencer, Debenhams, The Body Shop, ExxonMobil (Esso) and The Simon Communities of Ireland.
Mr. John Clifford	Subject Matter Expert	Former Deputy Buyer and Department Manager Clery's with 35 years' experience in the retail industry. He holds an MBS and numerous other third level qualifications as well as serving an apprenticeship in Retail
Mr. Derek Hughes	Subject Matter Expert	Principal of 180 Degrees, a solution based Retail Consultancy with over 30 years of hands-on Retail experience. Derek was CEO and founder of <i>Hughes &amp; Hughes</i> , a founding Director of <i>Insomnia Coffee Company</i> and founding Director of the <i>Bord Gais Irish Book Awards</i> .
Mr. David Quirke	Subject Matter Expert	Founder of Wholesome Kitchen. He held numerous senior management positions in Lidl and was the programme manager LIDL's BA in Retail Management in partnership with DBS



## Part 3 Findings of the Panel

### 3.1 Summary Findings

Following a review of the QA documentation submitted with the provider's application, and a site visit by the panel, this report outlines the panel's recommendation for approval of the draft QA presented by RIS for reengagement.

The panel has included a number of commendations to the panel in its statement of overall findings, and additionally a number of items of *specific advice* for the provider in Section 6.2 of this report.

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### 3.2 Recommendation of the panel to Programmes and Awards Executive Committee of QQI

	Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate
<b>Approve</b> Retail Skillnet Ireland draft QA procedures	<b>X</b>
<b>Refuse approval</b> of Retail Skillnet Ireland draft QA procedures <b>with mandatory changes</b> 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>	
<b>Refuse to approve</b> Retail Skillnet Ireland draft QA procedures	



## Part 4 Evaluation of provider capacity

### 4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>4.1.1(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?</i>	Yes	RIS's CRO is included in its application; RIS has a track record of certification at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 in Ireland.
<b>4.1.2(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?</i>	Yes	To date, RIS has certified 8,472 learners for Level 5 minor awards and 64 for Level 6 minor awards.
<b>4.1.3(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?</i>	Yes	Appendices to the draft QA manual include the Skillnet Ireland Training Networks Programme Operating Guidelines, the ToR for the Retail Ireland Skillnet Steering Committee (RISC), the ToR for the Retail Ireland Board, the Retail Ireland Constitution and the the ToR for the proposed Apprenticeship Consortium Steering Group (CSG). Additionally, Ibec/Retail Ireland is listed in the application as the parent organisation.
<b>4.1.4(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?</i>	Yes	Appendix 43 contains the MOU template between LYIT and RIS; LYIT are solely responsible for the QA associated with this collaboration.
<b>4.1.5(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?</i>	Yes	The provider's application contains a statement of compliance and declaration.
<b>4.1.6(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>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</i>	Yes	RIS has been a QQI/FETAC approved centre since 2003, and is in good standing in Ireland, the sole country in which it operates.



	<i>enrols 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 the provider's legal and compliance requirements meet criteria 4.1.

RIS has been operating since 2000, and has a track record of certification. The provider submitted a statement of compliance and documentation with its application for reengagement that is indicative of adherence to the legal and compliance requirements of QQI.

**4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.2.1(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?</i>	Yes	RIS submitted the following relevant evidence: Auditor's Letter , Budget 2019 Income & Expenditure, SO46 Signed Funding Agreement
4.2.2(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?</i>	Yes	RIS programmes are well-supported by industry partners, and on-going demand is evident, particularly in relation to the proposed apprenticeship programme.
4.2.3(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?</i>	Yes	RIS is governed by both Ibec and Skillnet Ireland; Section 2.1 of the draft QA manual outlines RIS governance structures, and these are discussed further in Section 5.1 of this report.
4.2.4(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?</i>	Yes	The provider has a track record of certification at Level 5, and employs a full-time QA Officer whose job description entails engaging with QQI (see Appendix 7 of the RIS QA manual)

**Findings**

The panel is satisfied that the provider's resource, governance and structural requirements meet criteria 4.2.

RIS is a non-profit organisation. However, all programmes provided are required to generate sufficient income to cover the expenses incurred in delivery. The process for development of new programmes requires evidence of sufficient demand from industry, and Programme Boards review programmes annually to assess their financial viability.



**4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>4.3.1(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?</i>	Yes	RIS was established in 2000, and has been a QQI/FETAC approved centre since 2003.
<b>4.3.2(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?</i>	Yes	RIS collaborates with a long-term team of part-time tutors. RIS programmes are typically scheduled 12 months in advance, allowing ample time to recruit additional staff as needed.
<b>4.3.3(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <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 panel is satisfied that the provider's track record of certification, and its approach to the re-engagement process reflects its capacity to co-operate with and assist QQI and provide QQI with information as specified in Section 45(3) of the 2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act.
<b>4.3.4(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <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	RIS lease facilities for teaching and training purposes from other providers (Griffith College; Galway Business School) and from hotel/conference venues as required. All premises are subject to evaluation against a facilities checklist and required to meet specific criteria prior to their use for programme delivery.
<b>4.3.5(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?</i>	Yes	Admission, progression and recognition are outlined in Section 4.2 of the draft QA manual.
<b>4.3.6(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?</i>	Yes	Assessment of learners is outlined in Section 7 of the draft QA manual.



<b>4.3.7(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?</i>	Yes	Protection for Enrolled Learners is outlined in Appendix 11 of the draft QA manual.
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**Findings**

The panel is satisfied that the provider's programme development and provision requirements meet criteria 4.3.

RIS has a stable complement of appropriately qualified teaching staff. Access, transfer and progression arrangements are in place that are suitable to the provider's programme context, and policies are in place to support fair and consistent assessment of learners. RIS has a track record of certification with FETAC and QQI.



#### **4.4 Overall findings in respect of provider capacity to provide sustainable education and training**

The panel is satisfied that RIS has the capacity to provide sustainable education and training within its current scope of provision.

Appropriate evidence was submitted as part of the provider's application for reengagement. This evidence was indicative of the provider having a sufficient resource base, appropriate staffing and established procedures.

The panel has identified some areas where recommendations are made for improvement. These are listed in section 6.2 of this document as items of *specific advice*.



## Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by <Provider Name>

*The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of RIS quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) and Topic Specific QA Guidelines - Blended Learning and Apprenticeship. 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 finds that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed, but makes several recommendations for improvement.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require QA policies and procedures to include a description of processes. The guidelines also require roles and positions responsible for the implementation of quality assurance policies and procedures to be identified, and clearly described and designated.

RIS outlines its governance and management of quality in Section 2 of its draft QA manual. The provider's application states that boards and panels are in place to provide academic governance, and to oversee variously the development, coordination and governance of programmes. For non-apprenticeship programmes this involves Retail Ireland, the Retail Ireland Skillnet Steering Group and Skillnet Ireland. For a proposed apprenticeship programme, a Consortium Steering Group is also indicated.

During the site visit, the panel sought to understand in greater detail how duties were separated between committees and boards, and to gain a clearer definition of these. The panel noted that the diagrammatic representations provided in the draft QA manual (both within the main document and the Appendices) were not readily comprehensible. Further, while Terms of Reference were available, the membership (and potential overlaps in membership) of these units of governance and management was not made transparent in the documentation. Consequently, the panel offers items of *specific advice* to the provider pertaining to this in section 6.2 of this report.

QQI's guidelines also require QA systems to consider risk. RIS undertakes risk assessments, maintains a risk register and develops risk mitigation measures. Risk is reported by the Head of Centre to the Retail Ireland Skillnet Steering Committee (RISSC). The panel acknowledges the provider's practices in this area, but notes as further item of *specific advice* that higher level risks should consistently be taken account of in risk monitoring and management. Specifically, risk assessment should encompass the dimensions of reputation, operations, strategy and finance.

Finally, QQI's guidelines emphasize embedding a quality culture to ensure that the totality of a provider's teaching and learning community is working coherently toward the implementation of the quality agenda. With regard to this, the panel acknowledges the priority placed on QA policy and procedures evident in the provider's application, and offers an item of *specific advice* in relation to defining a quality culture internally.

### 2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

**Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

RIS details its draft QA within its Quality Assurance Manual and book of Appendices. The draft QA overviews the provider's policies and procedures with reference to the dimensions of QA as described in QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The provider's QA also takes account of QQI's 2016 Sector Specific for Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guideline and QQI's 2016 Topic Specific Apprenticeship Programmes Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

During the site visit the panel explored the extent to which the draft QA submitted by RIS is embedded within the organisation, and implemented with consistency across multiple delivery locations. Subsequent to these discussions, the panel is generally satisfied that RIS is managing the potential QA risks of multi-site programme delivery effectively.

RIS employs a full-time Quality Officer to ensure the effective implementation of the provider's Quality Assurance System (QAS). The Quality Officer is tasked with ensuring that all staff have an understanding of their role in implementing the QAS, and promoting the benefits of an established QAS to staff, learners and to all stakeholders. The Quality Officer was available for discussion with the panel during the site visit, and outlined that the role included engaging with QQI, as well as Skillnet Ireland, Ibec and other external bodies that undertake audits and reviews of the provider's practices.

The panel has recommended some amendments to the presentation of RIS QA in relation to the dimension of governance and management (discussed in Section 5.1 above). However, the panel notes that the QA documentation submitted was generally clear and comprehensive, and has therefore noted a commendation to the provider on this point within the statement of overall findings contained in this report.



### 3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### **Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require the development of new programmes to be conducted systematically, to involve consultation with stakeholders and to be evaluated by appropriate internal decision-making structures. RIS notes in its application documentation that new programme proposals can come from multiple sources, and a sub group is formed to assess a proposal. The role of the sub group is to consider proposed new programmes in light of the organisation's overall strategic direction and the academic, financial, legal and organisational implications of a programme's provision. The new programme proposal will consider the views of employers, education and training providers and external bodies such as the Regional Skills Forum.

RIS have a number of boards and panels in place to oversee the development, coordination and governance of its programmes. During the site visit, the panel sought to understand in more detail the interaction between groups within the organisation that write policy and develop programme materials, and groups that approve these. Discussion also sought to clarify membership of various boards and panels within the organisation. The terms of reference for the various RIS boards, panels and committees are presented in Appendix 8; the panel has noted an item of *specific advice* in relation to the presentation of these in Section 6.2 of this report. However, in discussion on the day of the site visit, RIS confirmed that the provider's decision to commit to a new programme is determined in consultation with the Retail Ireland Steering Group, the Consortium Steering Group and the Programme Boards.

QQI's guidelines also require that learner admission, progression and recognition be pre-defined and published, and applied consistently and transparently in accordance with national policies and procedures for Access, Transfer & Progression (ATP). RIS states in its documentation that it is committed to ensuring admissions are informative to learners, that learners are fully briefed about RIS as an independent provider of education and training, and that they are provided with a learner handbook. The RIS draft QA manual outlines policies and procedures in relation to learner admission, progression and recognition in Section 4.2 that are aligned with QQI's guidelines. RIS facilitate induction for new learners. Appendix 17 contains the provider's RPL policy, which was discussed with the panel. RIS representatives acknowledged the challenge of handling RPL applications due to the work involved, and discussed the template provided to applicants to apply for access to the programme or for exemptions from particular modules of study. During the site visit, the panel also discussed access and entry level requirements, including English proficiency requirements, in greater detail with the provider, and was satisfied with responses from RIS representatives.

In accordance with QQI's guidelines, RIS undertakes programme monitoring and review via multiple channels. Section 4.3 of the provider's draft QA details learner, tutor and employer feedback, as well as processes for monitoring and supporting on the job learning via the Workplace Support Officer. Programme monitoring and review is also undertaken by the Programme Board and External Authenticators, as well as through the annual programme review and programmatic review processes.

**4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT*****Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that the provider assures itself as to the competence of its staff, and that both recruitment and further professional development of persons engaged in programme and service delivery.

RIS maintain a large panel of qualified and experienced tutors who do not work on a full-time basis, but are contracted by RIS when training is required. The majority of RIS tutors have been working in collaboration with the provider since 2010. RIS anticipates its current pool of tutors will be expanded to reflect increased learner enrolments in the future. Currently, a proposed apprenticeship programme will require significant additional staff resources pursuant to validation.

During the site visit, the panel sought to understand how RIS formally monitored the performance of teaching staff, and how RIS responded to bad experiences reported by learners. RIS representatives discussed how feedback is gathered from learners, and additional feedback obtained by skillnet and Ibec. RIS notes that this is a priority for the provider, as companies will respond to poor learner experiences by sending staff elsewhere for training. The panel also queried how part-time staff interact with the provider's QA processes. RIS representatives noted that the team of approximately fourteen tutors enabled individual support, and the provider's practice was to spend several hours with new tutors individually ensuring their familiarity with programme processes. During the site visit, the panel had the opportunity to meet with a number of RIS tutors. Discussions with the tutors reflected their substantial experience in education and training settings, and a commitment to teaching and learning in the discipline.

RIS notes in its application that due to close collaboration with Retail Ireland and connectedness with graduates that have completed the Retail Management Degree Programme, RIS has access to a talent pipeline for potential future tutors. RIS also plan the majority of its programmes 12 months in advance so staff resources are put in place in a timely fashion.

**5 TEACHING AND LEARNING*****Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that the quality of the learning experience is monitored on an on-going basis and that pedagogic styles incorporate national and international effective practice. The guidelines also require that learning environments, including off-campus learning, are appropriate.

RIS representatives outlined a number of mechanisms for monitoring the performance of teaching staff and learner satisfaction with the learning experience; some of these are discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of this report.

The RIS draft QA manual includes the provider's learning and teaching strategy in Section 6. The strategy outlines a range of pedagogic approaches. These included a blended approach to combining on the job, classroom, online and independent learning, an emphasis on collaboration (social learning), and the use of facilitative styles by tutors. During the site visit, the panel sought to understand directly from the provider how they engaged the learner in the content of the modules of learning it delivers. RIS representatives discussed the importance of making a direct link between theoretical content and activities that occur in the classroom and the workplace. The management of large classes was also discussed, and the provider noted that this was achieved through the use of group work, case studies, and apps such as Kahoot!

The QA of physical on campus facilities is discussed in Sections 5.2 and 5.7 of this report. The provider's draft QA manual includes discussion of workplace learning, and the role of supervisors or workplace mentors in providing guidance and coaching students. Section 6.2.2 of the RIS draft QA manual includes discussion of work-based learning, and identifies that all modules delivered by RIS have tasks that need to be completed in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to support learners with these, and at Level 5 workplace mentors are given a 2 day induction (for a proposed apprenticeship programme at Level 6 this is planned to be a 4 day induction). RIS maintains communications with employers in the early stages and at the end of module delivery.



**6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS*****Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that a provider's assessment framework incorporates procedures and systems for the security and integrity of the assessment process. Assessment strategies should take into account the extensive knowledge that exists about testing and examination processes.

RIS outlines assessment of learners in Section 7 of its draft QA manual, and notes that the majority of its modules are assessed through workplace-linked continuous assessment strategies. Methods used by the provider include presentations, work-based portfolios, reports, practical illustrations, workplace tasks, reflective journals and exams. During the site visit, the panel queried the role of learning journals in the assessment structure. RIS representatives stated that the workplace portfolios were reflective in nature and thus equivalent.

Plagiarism and academic misconduct are discussed in Section 7.5, and related procedures are included in Appendix 34. The provider includes information in Section 7.6 on reasonable accommodation.

The guidelines also indicate that the processes for assessment, complaints and appeals need to be fair, consistent, timely and transparent. During the site visit, discussion in relation to the distinction between rechecks, reviews and appeals indicated some areas of ambiguity. The panel have therefore noted an item of specific advice in relation to this in Section 6.2 of this document. The panel refers the provider to Section 4.10 of QQI's Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013, where these terms are defined.

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that the range of learning resources and learner supports offered is as coherent and integrated as possible, that pastoral care supports are provided by staff for learners and that the adequacy and effectiveness of those services is regularly reviewed. Learner representation mechanisms are required for learners to make representations to the provider about matters of general concern to the learner body.

Supports for learners are outlined in Section 8 of the RIS draft QA manual. This makes reference to pastoral care, programme related services and learner representation (via the Programme Board). During the site visit, the panel sought to understand these aspects of RIS QA in more detail. In discussion with the panel, RIS representatives clarified that one learner per class was allocated to the role of class representative, and that in the proposed apprenticeship programme two representatives (one male, one female) would be allocated for each programme in each delivery location. With regard to pastoral care, RIS indicated that where learner needs extended beyond the capabilities or expertise of internal staff the provider collaborates with LYIT and ETBs for referrals to appropriate services. With regard to the latter, the panel has included an item of *specific advice* to the provider in Section 6.2 of this document.

RIS use external training venues in the delivery of programmes; these venues are normally centres of education (e.g. RIS have long term rental arrangements with Griffith College Dublin and Galway Business School). However, RIS may use either conference and hotels facilities or member company's premises for programme delivery. Prior to entering into an arrangement to use any training venue the facilities are benchmarked against selection criteria that reflect course requirements and the needs of learners.

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## 8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

### **Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that reliable information and data are available for informed decision-making. This includes a requirement that information systems capture appropriate quantitative and qualitative measures of performance, that the learner management system is robust, and that the information system is designed to enable compliance with data protection legislation. With regard to this, the panel has included an item of *specific advice* to the provider in Section 6.2 of this report. RIS is advised to include a process map for how information is managed and shared within the QA manual.

During the site visit, the panel queried GDPR compliance within RIS. RIS representatives noted that the QA officer was also the data protection officer internally, and that RIS take direction from Ibec in this area. The panel queried whether a policy was in place for a data breach. RIS stated that this was currently under development with Ibec as an outcome of the provider's risk analysis.

## 9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### **Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that policies and procedures are in place to ensure information published is clear, accurate, objective, up to date and easily accessible. The guidelines also require that relevant programme information is made available to prospective and current learners.

The RIS draft QA manual outlines information that is made publically available, including QQI monitoring reports, in Section 10.1. Publicly available information also includes information on programmes, routes for access, transfer and progression, validation reports and programmatic review reports/programme improvement plans. Learner information is outlined in Section 10.2. RIS states that this includes information regarding the collection of personal data, including the purpose for which it is collected and the persons with whom it is shared. Practical information, a learner handbook and programme timetables are also provided.

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## **10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (incl. Apprenticeships)**

### ***Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that QA procedures include provision for external partnerships and second providers. RIS collaborate with LYIT in the design and promotion of a Degree in Retail Management Practice programme. However, LYIT deliver the programme and are solely responsible for the QA of the programme.

Within its application documentation, RIS states that in the event a collaboration is proposed, RIS will carry out due diligence to assure itself that the collaborator is one with which it would be happy to work. The purpose of this process is to satisfy RIS that the partner has the requisite legal standing, financial, academic and QA resources. For any collaborative arrangement with a new partner, legal experts within Ibec are available to provide assistance to RIS in ensuring all legal obligations are in place and applied.

QQI's guidelines also require that QA procedures include explicit criteria and procedures for the recruitment and engagement of external, independent, national and international experts to the roles of expert panellists, examiners and authenticators. This is discussed in Section 11.3 of the provider's draft QA, and Appendix 30 outlines the process for external authentication.

**11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW****Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require a provider to review, evaluate and report on the education and training services it provides and the QAs systems and procedures that underpin these. Providers will undertake on-going internal self-monitoring activities as well as broadly-focused, systemic self-evaluations carried out at specified intervals.

Section 12 of the provider's draft QA manual outlines extensive processes in place, and the panel has offered a commendation to the provider in relation to this in the summary of overall findings from the report.

**12 TOPIC-SPECIFIC QA PROCEDURES: BLENDED LEARNING****Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes require delivery of blended learning to take account of the organisational context (Section 3), the programme context (Section 4) and the learner experience context (Section 5). This was not entirely evident in the provider's presentation to the panel during the site visit, and was not explicit in the documentation submitted. An item of *specific advice* for the provider pertaining to this has therefore been included in Section 6.2 of this report.

The provider's submission for reengagement notes that RIS programmes involve face-to-face learning combined with other means such as workplace learning, online learning, and independent learning. During the site visit, the provider's representatives demonstrated how online elements of RIS programmes are currently delivered to learners, and presented plans for expanding this.

Currently, all staff and learners undergo induction training ensuring they are equipped to make best use of the provider's Virtual Learning Environment. RIS have a Social Media and E-learning Support Officer available to learners and tutors and other users. RIS tutors also regularly attend training workshops dedicated to online and blended learning.

The provider is in the process of transitioning to the use of Moodle to more effectively support a proposed apprenticeship programme. Plans are also in place to appoint a dedicated Communications and e-learning manager to provide on-going support to learners and tutors.

**13 TOPIC-SPECIFIC QA PROCEDURES: APPRENTICESHIP****Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

The panel notes that at the time of reengagement for QA, RIS does not deliver an established apprenticeship programme. However, RIS has indicated its intent to apply for validation of a Level 6 Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision pursuant to approval of its QA.

With regard to this, it is the view of the panel that the provider has established the organisational structure necessary to make a proposal for validation, as per Section 7 of QQI's 2016 Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes.

**Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings**

The panel commends the provider on a number of areas in which their performance during reengagement for QA was notably strong.

Firstly, the processes in place for self-monitoring and review, as outlined by the provider in Section 12 (table 12.1) and discussed with the panel during the site visit are rigorous, and provide multiple channels for informing continuous improvement.

Further, throughout the panel's site visit, the provider representatives engaged openly and constructively with the panel and demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm for the process. It is evident that much preparation had gone into the reengagement process.

In addition, the panel would like to commend RIS on the documentation submitted for reengagement with QA was generally clear, comprehensive and of a high standard

The panel has recommended approval of the draft QA submitted by RIS. However, the panel also offers several items of *specific advice* to the provider. These are detailed in Section 6 of this report.



## **Part 6 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice**

### **6.1 Mandatory Changes**

The panel does not recommend any mandatory changes.

### **6.2 Specific Advice**

The panel has several items of specific advice for the provider following review of the documentation and discussions with provider representatives during the site visit.

1. With regard to QA dimension 5.1, Governance and Management of Quality (specifically, management of quality assurance): RIS should redesign the diagrammatic representation of its internal governance and management structure (currently provided on page 9 of the current QA manual and page 119 of the appendices). This should show clearer definition of committee and board structures and more obvious separation of duties. This could usefully be separated into, for example,
  - A visual representation of the governance structure
  - A visual representation of the organisational structure
  - A process map of the provider's Quality Assurance
2. With regard to QA dimension 5.1, Governance and Management of Quality (specifically, management of quality assurance): RIS is advised to be more specific with regard to membership of its committees and boards within its QA documentation. Membership of committees, identifying individuals and their roles within the organisation, should be listed in addition to Terms of Reference and other relevant information.
3. With regard to QA dimension 5.1, Governance and Management of Quality (specifically, a system of governance that considers risk): RIS should take account of higher level risk in risk monitoring and management. These should typically include the dimensions of reputation, operations, strategy and finance.
4. With regard to QA dimension 5.1, Governance and Management of Quality (specifically, embedding a quality culture): of QA: RIS is advised to be more definitive within the QA manual in Section 3, and to state in clear terms what a quality culture means to the provider.



5. With regard to QA dimension 5.3, Programmes of Education and Training: the provider is advised to define precisely what it means by a FET credit.
6. With regard to QA dimension 5.6, Assessment of Learners: the provider's documentation should clearly specify what is meant by a recheck, review and appeal (and processes associated with these). Further, the provider is advised to ensure that no individual involved in the original assessment is involved in any of these processes.
7. With regard to QA dimension 5.7, Supports for Learner: RIS is asked to clarify how supports are provided nationally for learners, i.e. literacy support. The panel advises that the provider should consider entering into MOUs with ETBs to safeguard its processes for learner support.
8. With regard to QA dimension 5.8, Information and Data Management: RIS is advised to include a process map for how information is managed and shared within the QA manual.
9. With regard to QA dimension 5.12, Blended Learning: QQI's 2018 Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes identify that delivery of blended learning should take account of the organisational context (Section 3), the programme context (Section 4) and the learner experience context (Section 5). This was not entirely evident in the provider's presentation to the panel during the site visit, and not explicit in the documentation submitted. The panel acknowledges that this is due in part to the continuous development of the Blended Learning strategy by the provider. The panel recommends moving forward that the alignment of the strategy to the relevant guidelines be made more visible in the programme documentation.

## **Part 7 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider**

<b>NFQ Level(s) – min and max</b>	<b>Award Class(es)</b>	<b>Discipline areas</b>
5 -6	Major and Minor	Business (Retail)





**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

## **Part 8      Approval by Chair of the Panel**

This report of the panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the approval of the draft Quality Assurance Procedures of <Provider Name>.

Name:

  
John Vickery

Date:

8<sup>th</sup> July 2019



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

Document	Related to
No additional documentation was provided to the panel during the site visit.	

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

Mr. Sean Carlin	General Manager Retail Ireland Skillnet
Ms. Theresa Gallagher	QA Officer
Dr. Oran Doherty	Acting Programme Director
Ms. Roisin Woods	Tutor and Online Learning
Dr. Adele Smith	QA Advisor
Mr. Thomas Burke	Director, Retail Ireland
Ms. Irene Canavan	Workplace Monitor
Dr. Isobel Cunningham	Tutor and e-learning specialist
Mr. Marty Gillespie	Tutor – Retail IT
Mr. Laurence Dempsey	Tutor – Health and Safety
Ms. Sonya Boyce	Tutor – Legal Issues in Retail
Mr. Karl McNulty	Tutor – Food Safety
Ms. Alison Allen	Tutor – Retail Security
Ms. Nichola Flood	Tutor – Retail Pharmacy
Mr. Michael Farren	Tutor - Financial Information for Decision Making
Mr. Alan Kelly	Tutor – Capstone Module and e-learning specialist
Mr. Shane Flynn	Managing Director - Aramark
Ms. Caroline Burns	HR Manager – Marks and Spencer
Mr. Willie O'Byrne	Managing Director of BWG Foods
Mr. Leonard McAuliffe	Capability Manager - Boots
Ms. Orla Farrell	Learning & Development Manager - Musgraves
Ms. Elizabeth Bowne	Senior Executive - Small Firms Association
Mr. David Nally	Learning, Development & Communications Manager – Woodies
Mr. Peter Donohoe	HR Manager – BWG
Ms. Cathy Kearney	HR Manager - Triode Newhill Management Service

Tuesday 27 August 2019

**Ref: Retail Ireland Skillnet Response to QQI Panel (Second Response)**

Dear Panel Members,

Our Programme Team have taken all the conditions and recommendations on board and have addressed where deemed necessary. .

In addressing the conditions and recommendations, we have compiled and attached a number of Documents.

1. Document outlining changes made to QA Manual
2. Document outlining changes made to Apprenticeship Programme
3. Updated QA Manual with changes highlighted
4. Updated QA Appendices with changes highlighted
5. Updated Apprenticeship Document with changes highlighted
6. Apprenticeship Appendices

Finally, on behalf of Retail Ireland Skillnets, I would like to thank you again for the constructive conditions and recommendations. I hope the amendments address all concerns identified.

Kind Regards

Dr. Oran Doherty

Programme Director for the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision

086 3425819