



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Corporate Plan 2016

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QQI CORPORATE PLAN 2016

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INTRODUCTION

This is the third Corporate Plan that QQI has published since its establishment in November 2012 and the first which contributes to meeting its Strategy Statement 2016-2018.

QQI has a broad range of legislative and other functions relating to qualifications and quality assurance and the Corporate Plan reflects this diversity. However, these functions all inter-link in their focus on the quality assurance and improvement of qualifications, research and institutions; in their objective of providing information and communication around these functions; and in QQI's wish to continuously improve the quality of its public service. Collectively, these are the key approaches that underpin our Strategy Statement 2016-2018 and against which actions will be designed each year to deliver on our intended outcomes.

As an actor within a complex education and training environment, QQI continues to place significant importance on its relationships with government departments and agencies, professional and regulatory bodies, and providers and institutions and their representative bodies. We would like to acknowledge the cooperation and support received on a number of fronts to date as the organisation has developed from amalgamated body to an organisation in its own right. We look forward to collaboratively working towards the successful achievement of this Corporate Plan over 2016.

QQI CORPORATE PLAN 2016 IN CONTEXT

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

QQI commenced a Comprehensive Policy Development Programme soon after its establishment. 2016 sees additions to this programme in a number of key areas. QQI is responsible for the agreement of Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines upon which the providers with which it interacts design their quality assurance procedures. It is the effectiveness of these procedures that forms a significant part of the external reviews that QQI undertakes with providers; QQI's HE Review Policy will be published in the first quarter of 2016 and this will be supported by the development of a Higher Education Institutional Review Handbook. The structure of the QA Guidelines developed reflects the commonality but also the diversity of teaching, learning and research environments. Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines feature in the Corporate Plan as an early deliverable. These apply to all education and training providers. They are supplemented with sector and topic-specific quality assurance guidelines which reflect the elements that are particular to a given context and need to be captured as such. Other important areas of policy development include QQI's Validation Policy and Criteria which is anticipated to be published in the second quarter of 2016.

QQI AS AWARDING BODY

QQI's role as an awarding body applies largely to private providers of education and training in the further and higher education and training sectors. Prior to QQI validating a programme of education and training it must first approve the provider's quality assurance procedures. Whilst this is a demand-led activity, it is anticipated that for 2016 approximately six providers will seek to undertake this initial access to programme validation process.

QQI is also responsible for developing standards that are appropriate to a given award and level on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Depending on the purpose and level of the qualification, these can be broad statements of knowledge, skill and competence, or more detailed specifications for the design of programmes. A number of the activities scheduled for 2016 relate to developing a plan for standards development for the duration of the strategy statement (2016-2018) and commencing delivery on that plan in 2016. The validation of programmes in further and higher education and training based on standards of education and training is a very significant part of QQI's functions. A particular feature of validation for 2016 is apprenticeships. As the provider of the established apprenticeships SOLAS is in a process of submitting its programmes to QQI for validation. Nationally, new apprenticeships are also currently being developed by consortia of employers and providers. It is anticipated that programme validation applications will be made to QQI in 2016 by providers on behalf of some of these consortia.

The certification of learners by QQI represents the successful demonstration of learning outcomes by learners in a quality assured education and training environment. 6 certification periods are planned for 2016 and QQI undertakes to ensure that certification requests submitted for these periods are 100% met. We are also focussing this year on a more user-friendly representation of this data, which will graphically illustrate the distribution of QQI awards on a national basis by learner and provider characteristics.

QQI AS EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE BODY

When QQI was established, the quality assurance of providers that had been approved by its predecessor organisations retained a standing under the 2012 Act. Approval of quality assurance procedures of providers offering programmes leading to QQI awards will be based on the Quality Assurance Guidelines that were outlined in the Policy Development section above. Schedules for re-engagement will be advanced in 2016. QQI is also statutorily enabled to carry out a review where it believes that there is cause for concern and has made allowances to resource 'for cause' reviews if it is deemed necessary in 2016.

QQI's statutory quality assurance and improvement role also extends to what are termed designated awarding bodies under the 2012 Act (i.e., the universities, the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)) and to the Institutes of Technology. These institutions all have their own statutory or delegated awarding powers and QQI acts in this context as external quality assurance body. The Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines referenced under Policy Development apply to these institutions, along with the sector and topic specific guidelines particular to their contexts and provision. In 2016 QQI will be introducing an online means for these institutions to submit Annual Institutional Review (AIR) reports. These reports will be synthesised for publication and will contribute to the agenda for Annual Dialogue Meetings. Following publication of its Higher Education Review Policy and Higher Education Institutional Review Handbook, QQI will be establishing a schedule for periodic review of these institutions and for private higher education institutions. The first quarter of 2016 will also see the publication of a report by QQI of an analysis of published internal statutory reviews conducted by the universities and institutes of technology; the document focuses on the reported impact of the reduction in funding in the period 2008-2015 on teaching and learning and its environment.

QQI AND THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS (NFQ)

In 2016 QQI will be commencing a significant project which will seek to establish a strategy for the continued development of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This process will include elements that examine the quality of implementation of the Framework; its impact, and how this can be measured on a longitudinal basis; and national views on its future direction. As a reflection of its national ownership, the process of developing a strategy for the NFQ will be a collaborative process that will engage with a wide range of stakeholders and users, including other national awarding bodies; providers; professional bodies; employers; learners, and European and international partners.

QQI'S ACTIVITIES IN A EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Education and training, and quality assurance and qualifications systems in Ireland, are connected to a range of European and international initiatives. This wider environment is clearly reflected in QQI's activities and indicators for the coming year. The National Framework of Qualifications, which brings qualifications and quality assurance together, is part of a network of qualifications frameworks in Europe and internationally which assist with the comparison and recognition of qualifications and support the mobility of learners. In further support of the objectives of mobility of qualifications in the interests

of the individual, society, and employers are NARIC-Ireland and Europass. NARIC-Ireland provides advice on the recognition of qualifications. Europass promotes a number of mobility tools. Work plans for both of these functions for the coming year have been agreed and will be implemented in 2016.

ENGAGEMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

As a body that has responsibilities that span the further and higher education and training and qualifications system, it is extremely important that QQI continues to build relationships with other organisations and to work, where appropriate, in collaboration with providers and institutions. Having developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2015, we will be working with our colleagues in SOLAS to develop an MOU with similar objectives over 2016. QQI will also continue to engage with networks of colleagues on areas of mutual importance; for example, the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) Network makes a very positive contribution to improving access, transfer and progression arrangements, a core interest of QQI and central to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI will also be initiating and facilitating a number of quality improvement activities. Notably, together with the HEA it is funding a National Student Engagement Programme which will be piloted with a number of higher education institutions in conjunction with their students' unions. The objective of the programme is to provide training for students in engaging with quality processes at an institutional level and to increase the capacity of institutions to provide high quality engagement opportunities for learners. QQI will also be hosting a number of quality improvement events over the year which will be tailored to reflect current quality assurance developments in the further and higher education and training sectors.

ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

As QQI continues to integrate and deliver its statutory functions it is also developing as an organisation. This year QQI will publish its first Human Resource Strategy and will introduce devolved budgeting; both of which are intended to increase the level of interconnected autonomy at which individuals can undertake their roles. We are also focussing this year on strengthening the operational infrastructure of the organisation by introducing an Enterprise Content Management solution and further formalising our Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) systems. As the organisation continues to improve the human resource, financial, technological and operational aspects of its activities, corresponding benefits for providers, learners and other stakeholders will emerge.

OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

QQI revisited its mission, vision and values when developing its second Strategy Statement 2016-2018 and found that they remained relevant and appropriate to this next stage of its development. They have in turn informed the activities and indicators that we have chosen to form our 2016 Corporate Plan.

OUR MISSION

QQI promotes the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training, and quality assures providers.

QQI supports and promotes a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders.

OUR VISION

Extensive high-quality education and training opportunities with qualifications that are widely valued nationally and internationally.

OUR VALUES

Improvement-Oriented: We are a learning, developing and evolving organisation, committed to continuously evaluating and improving the quality of our work. This underpins our approaches to assuring and promoting improved quality in education and training.

Collaborative: We collaborate with our stakeholders to build confidence and we aspire to the improvement of the quality of education and training opportunities and the recognition of qualifications.

Independent: Although we work within the broad framework of Governmental policy, we are operationally independent in the performance of our functions and in our decision-making. We operate with integrity and in a transparent, fair, equitable, impartial and objective manner.

Professional: We treat all persons with respect, dignity and courtesy. We work to the highest standards of public service with regard to accountability, effectiveness, responsiveness and efficiency.

Learner-Centred: We promote a culture of access, responsiveness, flexibility, trust and quality in education, training and qualifications. We place the learner perspective at the centre of our work and also encourage stakeholders to do so.

QQI CORPORATE PLAN 2016

QQI's Strategy Statement 2016-2018 sets out the organisation's Goals to 2018; the Approaches it will take to achieving these Goals over a three-year period; and the Outcomes that will be achieved. These are categorised under broad headings of Qualifications, Quality Assurance, Communication and Information and Delivering High Quality Services. QQI's Corporate Plan 2016 identifies the Approaches that are being driven this year under these headings and the Goals to which these will contribute.

QUALIFICATIONS

No.	Committed Approach	Associated Indicators	Delivery Target
Goal 1	To support the development of education and training programmes with clear occupational and/or educational purposes and learning outcomes for informed career and other choices		
1.1	To develop NFQ standards and guidelines for employers, learners, awarding bodies and policy makers	Published report on outcomes of the review of awards standards at Levels 1-3	Q4 2016
		Published schedule for 2016-2018 review of awards standards (Levels 4-9)	Q3 2016
		Published revised agricultural standards	Q3 2016
		Developed and published Tourism Guiding Awards at Level 6 (Special-Purpose)	Q3 2016
		Jointly hosted European Peer Learning activity on the inclusion of upper secondary school qualifications in the National Framework	Q2 2016
		Co-operation between DES and QQI in relation to Early Childhood Care and Education awards	Ongoing in 2016
1.2	To complete a review of the application and effects of the NFQ – Phase I	Bi-lateral engagements undertaken with key NFQ stakeholders as part of national dialogue on the NFQ	Q3-Q4 2016

1.3	To promote the NFQ qualifications to stakeholders by maximising the use of QQI's online communication channels	<p>Processed requests for recognition of qualifications on a case by case basis through NARIC recognition services (Estimated 1,000 in 2016)</p> <p>Enhanced the NARIC qualifications online comparability database by increasing the comparability statements available by 10%</p>	Q4 2016
1.4	To make QQI awards in accordance with our policy and criteria	6 awards certification periods maintained delivering in excess of 165,000 paper certificates (parchments) 2016	Q1 to Q4 2016
Goal 2 To support the development of lifelong learning pathways for personal, social and professional development			
2.1	Towards documented and monitored progression pathways between further and higher education and training	RPL Practitioner Network established and website launched	Q1-Q2 2016
		Revised Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS) from FET to HE documented and disseminated	Q1-Q4 2016
		Scoping paper on national response to the EU Recommendation on the Validation of Non-formal and informal Learning developed	Q2 2016
		Support provided for establishment of DES-led national steering group on RPL	Q3 2016

QUALITY ASSURANCE

No.	Committed Approach	Associated Indicators	Delivery Target
Goal 3	To oversee an improved quality assurance system that is comprehensive and balances accountability and enhancement and promotes local responsibility.		
3.1	Develop a series of events and publications to help providers improve the teaching and learning environment	Promoting/facilitating QA improvement in education and training through Seminars, Conferences and Events. <i>E.g., April – FET event, Farmleigh December – HE event, Dublin Castle</i>	Q2 – Q4 2016
		Establishment of a training scheme to increase student engagement in quality assurance and the engagement capacity of institutions	Q2 2016
3.2	Implement new risk based approaches to monitoring and review that are systematic and proportionate	Dialogue meetings with 9 Designated Awarding Bodies (DAB) undertaken as part of monitoring function. (Under the 2012 Act these are the universities, DIT and RCSI)	Q3 to Q4 2016
		Implementation of online system for submission by higher education institutions of Annual Institutional Review (AIR) reports	Q2 2016
		'For cause' monitoring interventions conducted and published. (Estimated that 3 can be undertaken where cause is found to warrant a review)	Q1 to Q4 2016
		Higher Education Institutional Review Handbook published	Q3 2016
		Schedule for review of higher education institutions agreed	Q3 2016

		Schedule for re-engagement with ETBs agreed internally and communicated	Q4 2016
		Schedule for re-engagement with voluntary providers agreed internally and communicated ('voluntary' refers to providers that are not obliged by law to engage with QQI)	Q4 2016
		Overall procedure and criteria for delegation of authority published	Q4 2016
		Annual dialogue meetings with HEI's complete (IOTs - 7 institutions in 2016)	Q4 2016
		HE Review Policy published	Q1 2016
3.3	Introduce a comprehensive system of quality assurance guidelines	Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines published In addition to the Core Statutory QA Guidelines there are Sector Specific and Topic Specific QA Guidelines – see below for publishing timeframes:	Q2 2016
		Sector Specific Statutory QA Guidelines for private providers published	Q2 2016
		Topic Specific Statutory QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship published	Q2 2016
		Topic Specific Statutory QA Guidelines in flexible and distributed learning published	Q3 2016
		Topic Specific Statutory QA Guidelines on Research Degrees developed	Q4 2016
		Sector Specific Statutory QA Guidelines for IoTs developed	Q3 2016

		Sector Specific Statutory QA Guidelines for Delegated Awarding Bodies developed	Q3 2016
		Sector Specific Statutory QA Guidelines for the ETBs	Q3 2016
3.4	Validate programmes of education and training in accordance with QQI policy and criteria	Provider initial access to programme validation concluded (6 estimated)	Q1 to Q4 2016
		Programme validation policy and criteria published	Q2 2016
		Existing apprenticeships validated (17 anticipated). The level of activity is subject to submission of programmes to QQI within the agreed timeframe	Q4 2016
		New apprenticeships validated. The level of activity is subject to submission by provider consortia within agreed timeframe	Q3 2016
		Other programme validation activity completed (90% of accepted applications processed within 25 weeks)	Q1 to Q4 2016

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

No.	Committed Approach	Associated Indicators	Delivery Target
Goal 4	To provide clear, authoritative and comprehensive information to stakeholders and the public regarding QQI's roles, responsibilities and activities		
4.1	Develop strong working relationships with key sectors, organisations and bodies through a series of MOUs	MOU with SOLAS published	Q3 2016
		Data sharing agreement with SOLAS developed	Q1-Q4 2016
		Annual MFA with DES in place	Q2 2016
4.2	Build mutually supportive relationships with all QQI stakeholders to better communicate and collaborate with them	Establish NFQ network, the composition of which will be informed by the national dialogue (see 1.2)	Q3 2016
4.3	Promote and support the use of all internal information and communications systems	A formalised means of developing, organising and storing QQIs current and historical documents, and other content that relates to the organisation's functions is in place (Enterprise Content Management system)	Q4 2016
4.4	Publish reports on the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures	Synthesis reports of Annual Institutional Review (AIR) submissions compiled and published	Q3 2016
		System report on quality assurance published <i>'Quality in an Era of Diminishing Resources' Irish Higher Education 2008 -2015</i>	Q1 2016

4.5	Devise and implement a communication and information strategy to increase awareness of the NFQ, NFQ Awards, including QQI awards and the international education mark	Europass work plan 2016 implemented	Q4 2016
		EQF-NCP work plan 2016 implemented	Q4 2016
		Bulletin produced to disseminate EU information	Q2 2016
		Annual statistics report published based on 2015 data	Q3 2016
4.6	Develop a database of providers, programmes and qualifications in Ireland	Availability of Stage 1 (QQI awards) of the Programmes and Awards Database promoted and the second stage of the database scoped in collaboration with other awarding bodies	Q4 2016
Goal 5	To proactively enable and encourage QQI staff's ability to develop, thrive and be fully engaged in their work		
5.1	Ensure that the individual and collective skills and abilities of QQI staff support the ongoing delivery of a high quality service to providers and stakeholders	A Human Resource Strategy for the organisation agreed with the Board	Q2 2016
		Human Resource annual programme of work completed	Q4 2016
		Implementation of PMDS system across the organisation as part of the HR strategy	Q4 2016
5.2	Continue to develop and enhance the organisation in ways that promote a culture of openness and transparency	Financial budgets devolved across the organisation on an incremental basis	Q3 2016
		Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system developed and implemented	Q4 2016
		100% review of course details in Qualifax database in 2016. (Qualifax contains 15,000 courses and has 550,000 users)	Q4 2016

DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY SERVICE

No.	Committed Approach	Associated Indicators	Delivery Target
Goal 6	To enhance QQI's self-service systems, processes and technological capabilities to improve the quality and effectiveness of the service it delivers		
6.1	Develop and utilise high quality ICT systems that support progressive services to all stakeholders	Electronic event and campaign management system operational (Customer Relationship Management tool)	Q3 2016
		QQI awards and provider data is available in graphic visual representation on the QQI website	Q2 2016



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