



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

WHITE PAPER

Policy and Criteria for the Delegation of Authority to the Institutes of Technology to make Higher Education and Training Awards (including joint awards)

FOR CONSULTATION

QQI White Papers contain proposed QQI policy for public consultation and information. Following publication and consideration of the outcomes of consultation, they lead to Draft QQI Policy which is adopted by the Board of QQI. Once adopted, QQI policy and procedures are developed and implemented accordingly.

This White Paper proposes policy and criteria that pertain to the delegation of authority (DA) to make higher education and training (HET) awards (including joint awards).

QQI is seeking feedback from stakeholders on the policies and criteria contained in this White Paper.

Submissions can be emailed to
consultation@QQI.ie

The closing date for submissions
is **Friday 24 January 2014.**

In your submission please clearly indicate:

1. *Your contact details.*
 2. *Whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.*
 3. *If you do not wish your submission to be published.*
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1 INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes policy and criteria that pertain to the delegation of authority to make Higher Education and Training awards (including joint awards), for public consultation. It includes

- » Awards policy.
- » Auxiliary procedures and criteria for delegating authority.

Please submit any feedback by Friday 24 January 2014.

These policy, procedures and criteria are interim arrangements for the Institutes of Technology. They must not be taken as indicating the approach to be taken in future comprehensive QQI policy and criteria on making awards or the determination of awards standards; or in future comprehensive procedures and criteria for delegating authority to make awards.

1.1 BODIES WHICH MAY APPLY FOR DA

This policy applies exclusively to the recognised institutions to which the Higher Education and Training Awards Council had delegated authority under the 1999 Act; namely the Institutes of Technology (Institutes) where “Institute of Technology” means an institution referred to in section 3 (amended by section 4 of the Institutes of Technology Act 2006) of the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992.

1.2 LEGAL BASIS

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (the 2012 Act) provides explicitly for QQI to make joint awards. It also provides for joint awarding by bodies to which QQI has delegated authority (under the 2012 Act) to make awards.

Section 84(14) of the 2012 Act provides that after the coming into operation of Section 53 of the Act, and until QQI establishes procedures and criteria for the determination of a request for delegation of authority to make an education and training award, the procedures agreed under section 29(4) and criteria determined under section 29(3) of the 1999 Act apply to a request by a provider specified in paragraph (a) of section 52(2), except in so far as the procedures agreed under section may be inconsistent with the 2012 Act.

The saved procedures and criteria are: *Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to Make Awards* (Higher Education and Training Awards Council, 2004). These are supplemented by parts of *Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria* (Higher Education and Training Awards Council, 2010) and *Policy for Collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and Joint Awards* (Higher Education and Training Awards Council, 2012). The provisions of this policy have precedence over the saved policy, procedures and criteria.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish the infrastructure required to enable Institutes of Technology to establish Joint Awards under the 2012 Act. In this regard it aims to match saved DA policy to the 2012 Act. It is not intended to change otherwise QQI's approach to delegating authority to make awards.

2 POLICIES AND CRITERIA

2.1 APPROACH

The approach taken here is to enable joint awards to be made under the 2012 Act within the scope of an Institute of Technology's DA. Institutes are afforded complete autonomy to make joint awards within the scope of their DA assuming that the Institutes of Technology will implement suitable sectoral protocols and cede some control over the establishment of joint awards to a suitable sectoral resource of their own design (or make comparable arrangements). QQI envisages no involvement in the operation and management of joint awarding at individual Institute of Technology level. QQI will periodically review the operation and management of individual Institutes of Technology focusing on their joint awarding activity amongst other things.

Joint awarding agreements established by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council for Institutes of Technology (whether or not DA has been granted to make joint awards under the agreement) remain valid but they should be replaced (by modified agreements) as soon as practicable after the necessary DA has been granted by joint awarding arrangements between the parties to the agreement being replaced excluding QQI.

2.2 AWARDS AND STANDARDS

2.2.1 DEFINING JOINT AWARDS

The definition of joint awards in the 2012 Act is implicit via sections 2(1) and 50(1). This is consistent with the definition used by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council. The latter is essentially the same as the definition adopted (9 June 2004) by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region:

A joint award 'should be understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study

programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions’¹

The full form of this 2004 definition implies that various forms of issue (single diploma or multiple diplomas) are possible. QQI follows the Higher Education and Training Awards Council in preferring the issue of a joint award by way of a single diploma.

A necessary characteristic of a joint award made under the 2012 Act is that there is an agreement between awarding bodies to make a joint award. The term joint award does not comprehend the concept of issuing multiple uncorrelated diplomas for the same learning (as distinct from the issue of multiple (correlated) diplomas to manifest a joint award). The issue of multiple uncorrelated diplomas arises where different awarding bodies each make awards independently for the same work without formal agreement to act in concert.

2.2.2 AWARDS POLICY

The overall approach of Institutes of Technology with DA to making joint awards must be broadly consistent with QQI’s approach to making joint awards and with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and Framework standards.

Before a Joint Award can be established or made by an Institute of Technology under DA, the programme of education and training leading to the award must be validated by the Institute of Technology against one of the NFQ’s higher education award-types. This means, among other things, that the learning that must be achieved before a joint award may be made (the minimum intended programme learning outcomes) must be consistent with the NFQ award-types’ expected learning outcomes.

Additionally, wherever an award standard (or HET subject guideline) has been determined by QQI for the discipline area concerned it should be used to guide the development of the joint award but strict compliance is not required.

¹ Based on the definition adopted (9 June 2004) by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region.

2.2.3 RISK AND DUE DILIGENCE

Joint awarding is inherently risky because of the involvement of multiple institutions and the complexity of the arrangements required to ensure the joint award is soundly established and duly recognised.

In transnational arrangements the risk is not only to the institute's reputation but to the country's reputation.

Establishing a joint award between two well established public institutions based in Ireland is complicated because there are many more ways the arrangement can fail than in the case of a unilateral awarding arrangement. Systematic due diligence enquiries are essential as are careful consideration and documentation of the arrangements. Such matters are even more important when establishing joint awards with foreign awarding bodies where conflicts of law or culture may arise.

Due diligence must always include (but is not limited to) ensuring that the award is properly (in the context of its purpose and target learners) recognised. Joint awards should not be established if they are not sufficiently widely recognised. Recognition cannot be assumed rather it must be verified. At the very least the awarding bodies involved should ensure that the joint awards are recognised by qualifications authorities in their own jurisdictions and in all 'receiver' countries (countries where a transnational programme is provided).

2.3 DA PREREQUISITES, PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA

2.3.1 PREREQUISITES

Prerequisites for making an application for DA to make awards (the following is quoted directly from 52(3) of the 2012 Act) are:

- (a) *the provider has established procedures for quality assurance under section 28,*
- (b) *the provider has established procedures for access, transfer and progression under section 56,*
- (c) *the provider has complied with section 65 in respect of arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners, if applicable, and*
- (d) *if subsection (10) applies to the provider, the provider has consulted with the other person referred to in that subsection.*

Quality Assurance (QA) procedures for collaborative or transnational provision agreed with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council are relevant here and their approval by QQI remains in force unless otherwise indicated by QQI. However, joint awarding QA procedures agreed with it are no longer fully relevant or adequate because the parameters have changed significantly for joint awards with 2012 Act now that joint awarding is now explicitly provided for.

Extending DA into new discipline areas at Framework Level 9 or Level 10 will continue to rely on the Higher Education and Training Awards Council's Research degree Programme Policy and Criteria 2010.

2.3.2 PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA

The necessary DA must be in place before any joint awarding arrangements are established.

Reviews for the purpose of extending the scope of delegating authority (e.g. into new research discipline areas) will routinely address criteria for joint awarding.

Before establishing an initial joint awarding arrangement under the 2012 Act an Institute of Technology must first apply to QQI for extension of (all) Delegated Authority (granted under the 1999 Act) to cover joint awarding under the 2012 Act. Applications for extension should cover the entire scope of DA held rather than a partial scope.

The procedures and criteria here supplement the procedures and criteria determined by HETAC under the Act of 1999 pending the development of new comprehensive mutually supporting procedures by QQI under the Act of 2012 and new QA guidelines and procedures and criteria. The procedures agreed under section 29(4) and criteria determined under section 29(3) of the Act of 1999 shall apply to a request by an IOT for DA except where inconsistent with the Act of 2012 or with procedures and criteria established and published by QQI under Section 52 of the Act of 2012; i.e. HETAC's DA procedures and criteria apply subject to supplementary DA procedures and criteria determined by QQI until comprehensive new DA procedures and criteria are established by QQI.

The supplementary criteria for the purpose of extending DA to enable Institutes of Technology to make joint awards under the 2012 Act are that QQI is satisfied with the institute's capacity for:

- » establishing robust joint awarding agreements
 - » executing the awarding body functions, operations and management concerned with joint awarding
 - » operations and management (particularly governance) in respect of joint awarding and the provision of associated programmes of higher education and training
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The supplementary procedures for the purpose of extending DA to enable Institutes of Technology to make joint awards under the 2012 Act assume that the institutes of technology will:

- » Develop and implement sectoral protocols for the operations and management concerning joint awarding under DA and
- » Establish a sectoral evaluation and referral service of their own design.

The establishment of an evaluation and referral service is warranted because while collectively there might be a 'critical mass' of activity to maintain technical competence and a network of contacts with international qualifications recognition and quality assurance agencies, this cannot be guaranteed at every individual institute of technology. The evaluation and referral would include consultation with QQI as considered necessary and would be able to avail of its expertise and network of contacts.

The supplementary procedures for extending delegated authority to cover making joint awards (as distinct from otherwise extending the scope of DA) are in outline:

- » QQI would agree sectoral protocols with the Institutes through IOTI.
- » QQI would ask IOTI to commission a review of the institutes and the sectoral infrastructure against the supplementary criteria—terms of reference for this review would be specified by QQI in advance.
- » QQI would conduct a single sectoral-level 'differential' DA review to determine whether or not DA can be extended to all IOTs.

2.2.3 CONDITIONS OF DA

The statutory conditions (listed in the saved procedures and criteria) will apply and may be augmented by further conditions.

3 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The policy and criteria for DA to the Institutes of Technology to make HET awards (including joint awards) will be reviewed two years after the date of adoption by the Board or earlier if necessary.

REFERENCES

European Communities *ECTS User's Guide* 2009

Higher Education and Training Award Council *Assessment and Standards*, Revised 2013

Higher Education and Training Award Council *Core Validation Policy and Criteria* 2010 (HETAC Reference E.1.8)

Higher Education and Training Award Council *Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to Make Awards* 2004

Higher Education and Training Award Council *Policy for Collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and Joint Awards*, Revised 2012

Higher Education and Training Award Council *Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria* 2010

NQAI *Policies, actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners* 2003

IHEQN *Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions* 2009 (HETAC Reference E.2.3)

NQAI *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training* 2006

NQAI *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training* 2005

QQI *Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI Awards* 2013

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