WHITE PAPER

Re-Engagement with Legacy Providers: Overarching Policy

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 overarching policy on the re-engagement of legacy providers with QQI.

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

Submissions can be emailed to

consultation@QQI.ie

The closing date for submissions is **Friday 9 May 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.*

① INTRODUCTION

QQI has a comprehensive range of responsibilities for external quality assurance (QA) and for qualifications in Irish further and higher education and training. QQI's predecessor agencies (the FET and HET awards councils, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Quality Board) engaged with a wide-range and type of providers of education and training. Section 84 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (the 2012 Act) provides for the continuity of quality assurance services and awards for these legacy providers. Legacy providers are the designated awarding bodies (DABs), Institutes of Technology (IoTs), and providers who have a statutory current QA agreement with either of the former awards councils. Section 84 enabled the transition of legacy providers to QQI with a minimum of disruption.

English language teaching organisations (ELTOs) do not have statutory QA procedures that are saved under Section 84 of the 2012 Act. Re-engagement with ELTOs is a non-statutory process and can be managed through QQI's temporary continuation of the ACELS scheme until the International Education Mark (IEM) becomes available for ELTOs. Authorisation to use the IEM for ELTOs will require (amongst other things) a statutory QA approval under Section 30 of the 2012 Act.

Re-engagement for each provider will be a one-off occurrence which establishes its QA procedures with QQI in accordance with either Section 29 or 30 of the 2012 Act. QQI's intention through re-engagement is to recognise the work done in developing and implementing QA processes in the past while ensuring a sound statutory basis for future QA development and enhancement.

1.1 EXPIRY OF SAVINGS PROVISIONS

Section 84 allows for legacy providers to engage with QQI on a temporary basis until such time as new QQI policies and procedures are developed and commenced. This transitional status will expire. QQI will communicate with each legacy provider to give the timeframe within which QQI intends to re-engage with them and the date by which they must re-engage to continue having access to QQI services.

1.2   PROVIDER GROUPS[1]

Re-engagement will be implemented differently for different groups of providers. The 2012 Act distinguishes between providers who have statutory obligations to engage with QQI and those who engage with QQI on a voluntary basis. The process of re-engagement will commence the provider's on-going lifecycle of engagements with QQI. The concept of a lifecycle has been introduced in order to identify the range of engagements that will exist between QQI and a provider following the approval or establishment of their QA and differs between voluntary and obligatory providers, and between providers availing of different QQI services.

Establishing the lifecycles of providers will clarify QQI's role as an external QA agency and the responsibilities of providers in providing public accountability and public confidence in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). QQI will fully articulate each provider's particular lifecycle of engagements and will aim to operate engagements that add value to providers, rather than acting simply as regulatory gateways.

The aim of re-engagement is to allow providers to demonstrate that they can act autonomously in developing programmes and assessing learners, focussing on the achievement of learning outcomes. Providers will also be able to demonstrate continuous self-evaluation to achieve a strategic focus on enhancement and educational development.

1.2.1   OBLIGATORY PROVIDERS

Access to NFQ awards and the role of QQI as external QA agency for obligatory providers is enshrined in law which means that re-engagement *must* happen.

---

1   See Green Paper 4.14 on the <u>Re-engagement of Legacy Providers with QQI and Future Access to QQI Awards</u> for background and more details on provider categorisation.

Obligatory providers include:

» *Previously Established Universities (PEUs)*

The PEUs have completed statutory review cycles up to 2012/13 under the Universities Act, 1997. The requirements for re-engagement with the PEUs are to implement the 'new' aspects of the 2012 Act, e.g. QA of linked providers. The next stage for re-engagement with the PEUs involves the collaborative development of new QA guidelines and the development of a new review mechanism and the agreement of QA procedures between PEUs and their linked providers.

» *Other Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs)*

The DABs have completed statutory review cycles up to 2012/13 under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 (the 1999 Act). The other DABs are the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the National University of Ireland. The next steps for re-engagement with these providers are broadly similar to those of the PEUs.

» *Institutes of Technology (IoTs)*

IoTs have completed statutory reviews cycles from 2009 to 2012. IoTs have delegated authority (DA) to make awards. As well as the collaborative development of new QA guidelines and a new review mechanism, re-engagement with the IoTs requires further development of QQI's DA policy to bring it up to date with the 2012 Act.

» *Education and Training Boards (ETBs)*

The education and training institutions established by the former Vocational Education Committees, are now managed by the ETBs established in 2013. Re-engagement with the ETBs will reflect a fit for purpose sectoral QA system building upon the restructuring of the FET sector and the statutory national FET strategy. QQI will establish external quality assurance and ensure the effectiveness of QA procedures of FET providers under the 2012 Act.

» *Teagasc, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Fáilte Ireland*

Re-engagement with these agencies is happening through dialogue and the development of QQI policy for these bodies. This includes development of relevant QA guidelines and other policies such as for DA.

» *Solas*

QQI is engaging with Solas on a number of policy and system developments. Solas will continue to be responsible for some education and training provision. The establishment of Solas' QA procedures is dependent upon their establishment as an education and training provider and on the further development of the national FET strategy.

» *Recognised schools*

Where a recognised school provides vocational or adult education leading to an NFQ award that school is an obligatory QQI provider. In order to engage with these providers, collaboration on the establishment of QA procedures is required to satisfy the requirements of the 2012 Act.

1.2.2 VOLUNTARY PROVIDERS

Access to NFQ awards and QQI's role as an external QA agency is dependent upon a QA approval process which providers may or may not choose to engage in, this is what makes them voluntary providers. For voluntary providers, the core of re-engagement *is* the approval of their QA procedures by QQI under Section 30 of the 2012 Act. The intention through this re-engagement is to enable a more autonomous and sustainable voluntary provider to develop that takes full ownership of its own QA procedures.

It is important to state that, while some of the providers that had a QA agreement with the former awards councils will progress to QA approval by QQI, the QA procedures and capacity of some legacy voluntary providers may not meet QQI QA criteria. Equally, some providers may choose not to re-engage[2] with QQI.

QQI has not adopted the concept of a 'registered provider' as defined by the former awards councils. The approval of QA procedures must be for access to a QQI service, it is not a status in its own right. For example QA approval to seek or provide a QQI validated programme leading to a QQI award.

Voluntary Providers include:

» Private providers of FET and HET

~ Colleges, companies, individuals, etc.

» Community/Voluntary Sector Organisations

» Employer/Work Based Learning providers

» Sectoral Representative Bodies

---

2   See QQI White Paper(s) Policy and Criteria for FET/HET Legacy Voluntary Providers Continuing Access to Validation, published alongside this White Paper.

1.2.3   CURRENT ACELS RECOGNISED ELTOS

English language teaching organisations (ELTOs) do not have statutory QA procedures that are saved under Section 84 of the 2012 Act. Re-engagement with ELTOs is a non-statutory process and can be managed through QQI's temporary continuation of the ACELS scheme until the International Education Mark (IEM) becomes available for ELTOs. Authorisation to use the IEM for ELTOs will require (amongst other things) a statutory QA approval under Section 30 of the 2012 Act.

② THE RE-ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Fundamentally, the re-engagement process involves issuing policy, criteria and relevant QA guidelines for each specific group of providers in order to allow them to re-engage. Through either Section 30, or 29 of the 2012 Act, providers' QA procedures are then established.

2.1   Quality Assurance Guidelines

In order for any group of providers to re-engage, QQI must issue relevant QA guidelines, following consultation, to which the provider's procedures must have regard. QA guidelines provide the basis for assurance that the procedures underpinning provision can provide learners with a well-supported learning experience within the scope of the provider's provision.

2.2   Approval of QA Procedures (Section 30)

Once guidelines, relevant to a particular group of providers have been issued by QQI a process for the approval of the QA procedures of legacy providers (other than PEUs, see section 2.3) will be implemented for that group.

2.3   QA Procedures of the PEUs (Section 29)

Once relevant QA guidelines have been issued by QQI, the PEUs will establish their own QA procedures with regard to these in consultation with QQI under Section 29 of the 2012 Act.

2.4   Re-engagement mechanisms

A policy for each group will outline the mechanism for re-engagement with that group.

2.5   Fees for Approval of QA

A fee[3] will apply for the approval of a provider's QA procedures.

---

3   See Policy on Fees for QQI Services and the Fee Schedule October 2013 for details.

③ REVIEW

As re-engagement is a one-off process for each provider, there is no requirement to review this policy.

This policy will therefore expire once re-engagement has been completed for all providers.

Submissions can be emailed to

consultation@QQI.ie

The closing date for submissions
is **Friday 9 May 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.*