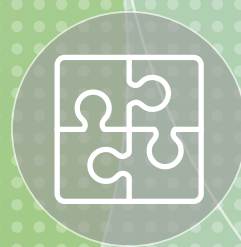# Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards

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# REVIEW HANDBOOK

QQI REVIEW

# CONTENTS

# 01 ▬ INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

### 1.1.1

QQI established *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* for all providers in April 2016, and *Sector-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards* (ETBs) in May 2017[1]. These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as the significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

### 1.1.2

As outlined in QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines, quality and its assurance are primarily the responsibility of providers of education and training. Self-evaluation and review of quality are fundamental elements of a provider's quality assurance system and the ETBs' external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review

of quality assurance by QQI. In October 2019, QQI published its *Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards*[2] (the Policy), outlining its intended approach to the first external reviews of quality assurance within the sector.

### 1.1.3

This handbook has been developed to assist each ETB in the preparation for, and during the conduct of, its external review. It is designed for multiple audiences, including ETB leaders and quality assurance professionals who may have a central role in the review process, and ETB staff and stakeholders who may be more peripherally involved. It is also intended to provide comprehensive detail on the process to members of each review team. Whilst this handbook aims to be comprehensive, it is envisaged that in preparing for and engaging with the review process each ETB will interpret and adapt it appropriately, reflecting its own organisational and operating context.

## 1.2 EXTERNAL REVIEW

### 1.2.1

External review is a core element of the broader quality cycle for ETBs (see Figure 1), providing an external dimension to internal quality assurance and review activity. The external review process

provides an opportunity for each ETB to evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of its quality assurance system and provides an opportunity for an external team of peer reviewers to reflect on the effectiveness of the ETB's quality assurance

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1   https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf
    https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Sector%20specific%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20ETBs.pdf

2   https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Inaugural%20Quality%20Assurance%20Review%20of%20Education%20and%20
    Training%20Boards%20Policy.pdf

(QA) procedures and to provide external perspective and advice on their enhancement. It also offers assurance to learners and the public that the learning experience within the ETB is being monitored for good practice and that it has effective arrangements in place for the quality assurance of its services.

Figure 1: ETB Quality Cycle



- » QQI External Quality Assurance Review
- » QQI Establishes Guidelines
- » ETB Develops Procedures
- » QQI Approves QA Procedures
- » ETB reviews application of procedures
- » ETB conducts and publishes internal reviews
- » Internal Monitoring by ETB
- » Reporting to QQI
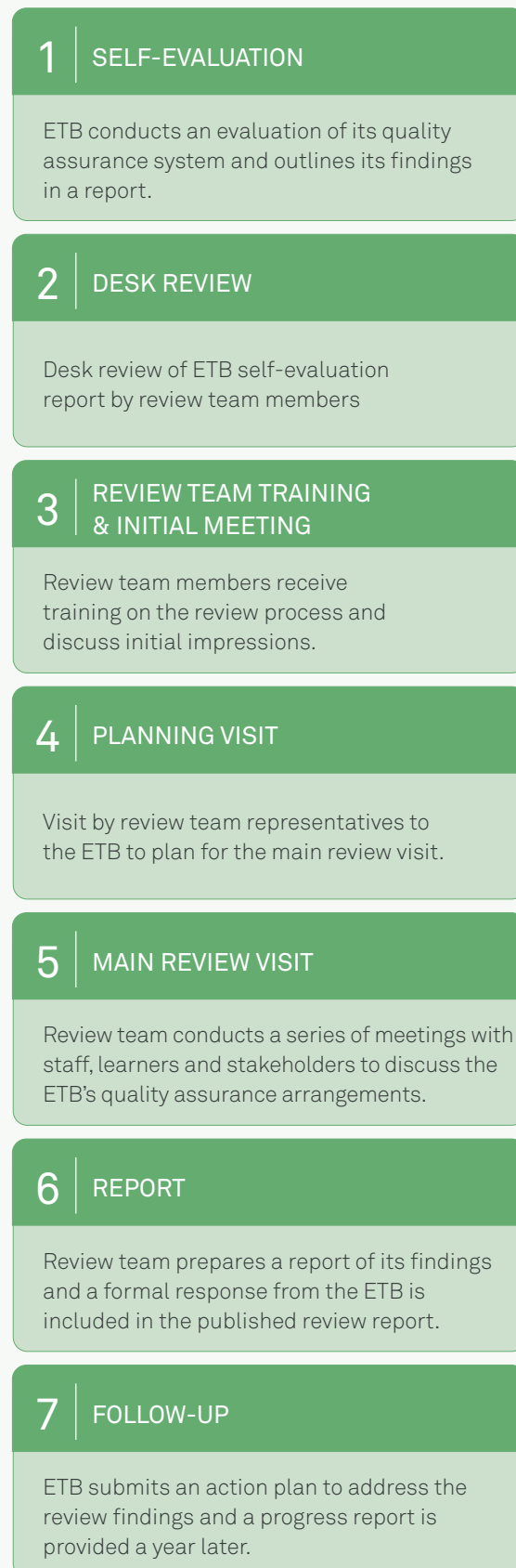- » ETB-QQI Dialogue Meetings

### 1.2.2

As outlined in the Policy, the inaugural review of each ETB will:

- » examine the design and planning of existing internal quality processes and their consistency with QQI's Core, Sector-Specific and Topic-Specific quality assurance guidelines (including those on Apprenticeship and Blended Learning) and other policies and procedures as relevant;
- » evaluate the effectiveness of internal quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of further education, training, and related services;
- » identify perceived gaps in the internal quality assurance mechanisms and the appropriateness, sufficiency, prioritisation and timeliness of planned measures to address them in the context of the ETB's current stage of development; and
- » explore ETB achievements and innovations in the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning.

### 1.2.3

The Policy specifies six purposes for the inaugural reviews, which are included in the terms of reference (ToR) for the reviews at Annex A. It also outlines a methodology for review based on a model widely adopted internationally in tertiary learning contexts. This document provides guidance on the core components of the review process as outlined at Figure 2.

Figure 2: Stages of the Review Process

**1 | SELF-EVALUATION**

ETB conducts an evaluation of its quality assurance system and outlines its findings in a report.

**2 | DESK REVIEW**

Desk review of ETB self-evaluation report by review team members

**3 | REVIEW TEAM TRAINING & INITIAL MEETING**

Review team members receive training on the review process and discuss initial impressions.

**4 | PLANNING VISIT**

Visit by review team representatives to the ETB to plan for the main review visit.

**5 | MAIN REVIEW VISIT**

Review team conducts a series of meetings with staff, learners and stakeholders to discuss the ETB's quality assurance arrangements.

**6 | REPORT**

Review team prepares a report of its findings and a formal response from the ETB is included in the published review report.

**7 | FOLLOW-UP**

ETB submits an action plan to address the review findings and a progress report is provided a year later.

# 02 SELF-EVALUATION

## 2.1 OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE

### 2.1.1
Self-evaluation is a reflective and critical evaluation completed by the members of the ETB community, including learners, staff at all levels of the organisation, and external stakeholders. It is the way in which the ETB outlines how effectively it assures and enhances the quality of its teaching, learning and service activities to support the achievement of its strategic goals. When it is completed effectively, and in an open and inclusive manner, it is one of the most important and valuable components of the review process.

### 2.1.2
The self-evaluation process provides an opportunity for each ETB to demonstrate, and analyse the implementation and effectiveness of:

» its quality assurance system in supporting the achievement of its mission and goals or targets for quality;

» its policies and procedures for quality assurance and quality enhancement;

» the ways in which its governance bodies are facilitated in, and are discharging, their responsibilities for quality assurance;

» the methods employed to ensure internal quality management processes comply with QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines;

» how it uses the outcomes of internal and external quality assurance and enhancement processes to identify strengths, weaknesses and enhancement objectives in its teaching, learning and service areas; to inform decision-making; and develop a culture of quality;

» the use of relevant information and data to support evidence-based decisions about quality;

» internal monitoring and review processes;

» progress on the development of quality assurance since its establishment;

» arrangements established for the assurance of the quality of collaborations, partnerships and contracted provision; and

» the enhancement of quality through governance, policy, and procedures.

It also enables the identification of innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

### 2.1.3
The **self-evaluation report** produced by the ETB following the self-evaluation process is the core document that will be considered by the review team in advance of, and during, the main review visit (see chapter 3). The self-evaluation report should provide the review team with sufficient information and evidence to assess the effectiveness of quality assurance within the ETB. It provides the documented evidence, or references to evidence, to support claims that the ETB is meeting the objectives and criteria set out in the ToR. The self-evaluation report sets the tone for the whole review experience. It should provide the core themes and key lines of enquiry for the review team to pursue during its visit; shape the key points of dialogue between the review team, ETB and stakeholder representatives; and inform the structure of the review visit and the resulting review report. The self-evaluation report provides an opportunity for the ETB to engage in open dialogue, reflection and critical evaluation and will be taken by the review team as demonstrative of the ETB's capacity for these.

## 2.2 THE SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

### 2.2.1

It is the responsibility of the ETB to devise its own systematic and critical process for self-evaluation, appropriate to its organisational context. The information in this section is provided for guidance purposes and is not intended to prescribe a particular approach. The specific self-evaluation methodologies chosen by the ETB should be carefully designed to ensure that they:

» have a clear focus and purpose;

» incorporate broad consultation with internal and external stakeholders, especially learners;

» are sufficiently rigorous, systematic, evidence-based and comprehensive to meet all of the objectives and criteria in the ToR;

» add value, minimise the impact on resources, and assist in building capacity for self-reflection and evaluation in the ETB (i.e. it is not simply a paper exercise or to be undertaken solely to satisfy external requirements);

» enhance understanding and ownership of quality assurance processes;

» provide an honest evaluation of strengths and weaknesses;

» demonstrate evidence of leadership at all levels and involvement of relevant staff;

» give appropriate consideration to the ETB's operating environment;

» integrate with, and build upon, other related management processes where relevant (e.g. strategic planning, operational management, internal audit, etc.);

» result in the identification of areas for improvement;

» are primarily evaluative in nature rather than descriptive.

### THE SELF-EVALUATION STEERING GROUP[3]

### 2.2.2

The most effective self-evaluation reports are produced through a collaborative and participative evaluation process, usually led by a small task and finish group comprising individuals who are in a good position both to steer the process and to comment on the effectiveness of the ETB's approach to quality assurance and enhancement. A sub-set of an existing committee or body within the ETB (e.g. the Quality Council or equivalent) could form the basis of the self-evaluation steering group so as to utilise existing structures. Alternatively, a new team could be created comprising individuals with roles and responsibilities spanning the organisation. In any event, it is recommended that distinct terms of reference are established for the its operation, providing clarity on respective roles and outlining the group's responsibility for co-ordinating the self-evaluation process, monitoring progress, and ensuring the production, approval and submission of the self-evaluation report by the required date as outlined in the published Review Schedule.

### 2.2.3

The group should include, at a minimum, learners; learning practitioners; staff that are involved in governance, support services and administration; and staff who manage quality assurance and enhancement across the ETB. The involvement of an external dimension is also recommended to provide additional objectivity and perspectives. The ETB review co-ordinator for the review process (see 2.2.6) will also be a key member of the group. The group is best chaired by a member of the senior management team to ensure that the evaluation process is open, reflective and evaluative and given credence within the ETB community. The group may also wish to consider the establishment of sub-groups to progress key themes or co-ordinate engagement/data collection activities with specific stakeholder groups in respect of the self-evaluation process.

### 2.2.4

Whilst the self-evaluation process should be as inclusive and participative as possible, it is recommended that the final self-evaluation

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3  The term 'Self-Evaluation Steering Group' is used in this document for ease of reference to denote those to whom the ETB has assigned responsibility for completing the self-evaluation report. The ETB may determine its own approach, structure or terminology for the development of its self-evaluation report.

report is written by a small group or possibly designated to one officer to ensure narrative coherence.

### 2.2.5
The self-evaluation process is a significant undertaking and the ETB should ensure that those charged with its completion have sufficient time, capacity, knowledge and resources to complete the task effectively.

### THE ETB REVIEW CO-ORDINATOR

### 2.2.6
The ETB is required at an early stage in the process to assign a review co-ordinator from within the organisation who will be the main liaison point internally; between the ETB and QQI; and for the review team during the main review visit. The ETB review co-ordinator should be a senior internal member of staff familiar with the ETB's policies, procedures and structures for the management of quality assurance and enhancement.

### 2.2.7
The ETB review co-ordinator will be responsible for:

» co-ordinating the internal process for the development, completion, approval and submission of the self-evaluation report;

» liaising with QQI;

» making the logistical arrangements for the review;

» liaising with QQI on the planning and main review visit schedules;

» ensuring that the review team is provided with any additional materials it requires;

» meeting daily with the co-ordinating reviewer and chairperson during the main review visit and attending sessions as required;

» co-ordinating ETB responses to the review report and feedback on the review process.

### PLANNING THE SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

### 2.2.8
The internal self-evaluation process will take a considerable amount of time to plan. It is important that the self-evaluation process begins early to give sufficient time to allow

for ownership by staff and learners, ideally no later than **6 months** in advance of the date for submission of the self-evaluation report outlined in the published Review Schedule. This timeframe should include provision for evidence-gathering and analysis; drafting; seeking feedback on drafts; final editing; and formatting, printing and binding. It should also include consideration of the meeting schedule of the relevant governance body within the ETB to facilitate approval of the self-evaluation report, and for endorsement by the Chief Executive, in advance of the required submission date.

### 2.2.9
It is recommended that the key activities, milestones and timescales for the process are determined at the outset of the process by the self-evaluation steering group and that regular meetings of the group are scheduled in advance to monitor progress.

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### 2.2.10
Providers that adopt a transparent, inclusive, reflective and evidence-based approach to the production of the self-evaluation report are more likely to achieve outcomes that are of value and useful to the review team members and to colleagues internally. The ToR for the inaugural review include an evaluation of the ETB's capacity for comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based self-evaluation: the approach and methodologies adopted by the ETB in developing its self-evaluation report will form part of the review team's assessment of the ETB under this objective. It is essential that the review is not solely a product of the ETB executive but that it involves as many staff, learners and stakeholders as possible and as appropriate to the scale and scope of the organisation.

### 2.2.11
It is recommended that the self-evaluation steering group identifies at an early stage its core stakeholder groups and the mechanisms by which it will engage with them on the self-evaluation. The group should design a programme of engagements that provides multiple opportunities for direct contributions and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders. This should include opportunities for discussions

with ETB governance bodies to inform and elicit views from these groups on the design, progress and conclusions of the self-evaluation. Engagements with staff should include learning practitioner, administrative, professional and support staff at all levels across the organisation. Engagements with learners should also provide opportunities for direct involvement of a varied profile of learners from different backgrounds, programmes, disciplines and service types. Equally, the identification and engagement of external stakeholders (examples are included at 3.6.3) should be as broad and wide-ranging as possible and it may be helpful to consult with internal stakeholders on the identification of these.

### 2.2.12

Different methodologies, tools, documentation and supports may be required to ensure the effective participation of the various stakeholder groups – particularly the ETB's diverse learner cohorts. The self-evaluation steering group should reflect carefully on the heterogeneity of its stakeholders and seek to adopt methodologies that are designed to facilitate high levels of engagement with, and meaningful outputs from, the groups concerned. It may wish to employ different sessions/methodologies for different themes and sections. A number of potential methodologies of engagement are outlined at Figure 3 below: however, it is recommended that the ETB is flexible and creative in considering approaches.

### 2.2.13

Communications will also need to be considered by the self-evaluation steering group in order to:

» ensure that stakeholders understand the purpose and importance of the self-evaluation process and their role within it;

» maximise engagement by all stakeholders, internal and external;

» establish a sense of shared ownership of the process by all participants; and

» achieve a representative report.

The group should consider the most effective means by which stakeholders can access information, e.g. by utilising existing structures such as internal committees, learner councils, employer engagement networks etc.; electronic channels such as the ETB's website, intranet sites, webcasts, social media etc; or live face-to-face briefings/question-and-answer sessions. Consideration may also be required of different formats to meet the needs of particular audiences.

### PROVIDER PROFILE

### 2.2.14

In order to support the identification of an appropriate review team, the ETB is required to submit a provider profile to QQI, outlining specified contextual information. The content of this report is outlined at Annex B.

Figure 3: Potential Engagement Methodologies



INTERVIEWS

WORLD CAFÉ

GAMIFIED ENVIRONMENTS

CONFERENCES

SURVEYS

WORKSHOPS

FOCUS GROUPS

ONLINE IDEAS AND ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

## SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

### 2.2.15

The self-evaluation report should be a concise (up to a maximum of 20-25,000 words[4]), reasoned analysis that transparently portrays the ETB, its identity and its approach to quality assurance and enhancement in accordance with the ToR. It is the responsibility of the ETB to determine the most appropriate format for its self-evaluation report, taking into account its particular profile and context and the ToR for the review. The following suggested content is provided to help guide the ETB in preparing its report. A sample self-evaluation report format is also provided at Annex C.

### 2.2.16

It is suggested that the self-evaluation report should contain the following core elements:

» Contextual information, commenting on any key trends emerging (e.g. changes in the learner population) that may have implications for the ETB's strategic direction and approach to quality assurance;

» A brief description of the process for the development of the self-evaluation report, evidencing the inclusive and consultative nature of the process adopted;

» In respect of each of the objectives outlined in the ToR:

~ A clear and simple explanation of the internal quality assurance arrangements, policies and procedures;

~ A brief outline of why these approaches have been adopted;

~ An evaluation of the implementation of the approach (i.e. is it applied fully and consistently across the ETB[5]?);

~ An evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the stated approach. This should include information on how the ETB has determined this (i.e. how does the ETB know

it is effective (or not)? What is the evidence for this conclusion?);

~ Conclusion and consideration of future actions. Overall, how effective are the quality assurance and enhancement arrangements in this area? What is working well? What are the challenges and how are these being addressed?

### 2.2.17

The self-evaluation report must meet the needs of its primary audience (i.e. the review team) in being reflective, analytical and critically evaluative in its nature, using reference to other sources for descriptive information where required. A well-written self-evaluation report will be user-friendly (i.e. jargon free and understandable by an external audience) and offer a balance between explanation and self-evaluation. Helpful methods of demonstrating an effective practice or process are flow charts or case studies, e.g. on the learner cycle; the programme cycle; partnership/collaboration agreement cycle; and unit (centre/service) planning and review cycle. A case study can provide an example of quality assurance in action, tracing the implementation of quality assurance and its governance from initialisation or approval, onwards to monitoring and review and, through this, analysing the interplay between the various procedures and their overall effectiveness. It can be a compelling way to communicate the reality of how a particular policy and procedure is implemented.

### 2.2.18

The ETB should set out its evaluation of effectiveness under each of the objectives in the ToR and make clear the basis for that view, including specific references to evidence and supporting materials[6]. The evaluative components of the report should be clearly marked and highlighted as such. In making evaluative judgements, the ETB should have regard to the criteria for the review outlined in the

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4   Excluding appendices.

5   The stated arrangements may include intended differences in respect of particular service/programme types. Where these exist, the evaluation of implementation should indicate whether the arrangements relevant to each programme/service are being implemented consistently within those programmes/services.

6   Examples of supporting evidence are outlined in Annex C.

ToR. Care should be taken to ensure that analysis and conclusions are free from unsupported assertions but rather are supported by clearly presented evidence to demonstrate how what is stated is known and can be verified. When appraising quality assurance activities, ETBs may find it helpful to reflect on the following:

» What progress has been achieved? What are the barriers to progress in this area?

» Is the activity distinctive or typical within the sector?

» Is the activity systematically employed and understood at all levels of the organisation? How does the ETB know?

» Can any benchmarking be undertaken?

» What is the feedback from internal and external stakeholders (learners, industry, graduates, staff, etc.)?

» What sources of expert opinion are available (e.g. outcomes from a peer review)?

» What qualitative and quantitative indicators are available to measure the performance of the activity?

» How does the activity inform planning and operational management?

» How are staff involved? Is this part of 'the way things are done'?

» How are learners involved? Is this part of 'the way things are done'?

» Does it impact the core functions of the ETB and lead to improvements?

» What improvements and outcomes can be directly attributed to the activity versus what would happen anyway?

» Is the activity having any other (perhaps unanticipated or unintended) impacts?

### 2.2.19

It is important that the self-evaluation report identifies challenges openly and does not disregard weakness, nor overstate or understate achievements. It is more effective if significant issues and challenges are identified by the ETB rather than by review teams. It is also useful to

outline instances where the ETB considers that it has adopted effective practice or practice that differs from sectoral norms and a brief commentary on this.

### 2.2.20

The self-evaluation steering group should consider sharing drafts of the self-evaluation report with stakeholders as it is developed to elicit feedback and ensure that the content of the report is genuinely representative[7]. When the self-evaluation report has been finalised, it is advisable that, in advance of submission to QQI, it is read and endorsed by the Chief Executive to confirm that it is an accurate reflection and evaluation of the ETB's approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

### SUBMISSION AND PUBLICATION OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

### 2.2.21

The ETB is required to submit 10 hard copies and an electronic version of the self-evaluation report and all appendices to QQI by the date outlined in the Review Schedule. On submission of the self-evaluation report, the ETB is also expected to confirm to QQI that the report has been published on its website. Upon receipt, QQI will distribute all material to the review team members.

### 2.2.22

Following an inclusive and consultative self-evaluation process, it is expected that the ETB will disseminate and communicate the final version of the self-evaluation report within its community and to key external stakeholders. In addition to providing transparency on the outcome of the self-evaluation process, the review team will expect that the stakeholders it meets during the main review visit will be familiar with the content of the report.

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7   This approach also provides opportunities for the self-evaluation oversight group to 'sense-check' the content to see whether a review team is likely to be able to follow and understand processes and access additional material if required.

# 03 ▬ EXTERNAL REVIEW

## 3.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REVIEW TEAM

### 3.1.1
QQI will appoint a review team to conduct the external review. Review teams are composed of both national and international peer reviewers, who may be current or former staff and learners from the education and training system or relevant external stakeholders. The ETB and its stakeholders must have confidence that the review is being conducted by competent individuals who have appropriate levels of experience and knowledge and who can offer an informed, expert opinion on the quality assurance activities of the ETB. QQI will seek to ensure that the individuals selected for the review team have an appropriate mix and balance of skills and experience. The full complement for each review team will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, external review, and a proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning.

### 3.1.2
In order to ensure confidence in the impartiality of the review, it is essential that the review is conducted in a transparent manner by external peers who are entirely independent of the ETB. Review team members will be asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest prior to appointment[8]. The ETB will also be asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest among the proposed review team members. QQI has final approval over the composition of each review team. Where a potential conflict of interest subsequently emerges, the responsibility for disclosing it rests with the person concerned in consultation with the chairperson. In such cases, QQI will rule on the continuing eligibility of the review team member in question.

### 3.1.3
QQI will endeavour to ensure that the composition of each review team is diverse and inclusive, including an appropriate gender mix. Each member of the review team will receive training on the Irish further education and training context, the ETB quality assurance context, the review procedure and their role in the review. Details of the designated roles within the review team are outlined in the ToR.

## 3.2 DESK REVIEW

### 3.2.1
In preparation for the planning and main review visits, each member of the review team will conduct their own independent desk analysis of the self-evaluation report and supporting materials. This will include data provided by SOLAS (e.g. on local context, strategic direction etc.), which will be submitted to QQI no later than four weeks in advance of the initial meeting of the review team. This information will be

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8    Information on reviewer conflicts of interest is outlined in QQI's *Roles, Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.*

shared with both the review team and the ETB. Each member of the review team will note any comments, queries and concerns arising from their analysis and arrive at an initial impression of the performance of the ETB in relation to the core elements of ToR. In advance of the first team meeting, each review team member will be asked to submit their initial comments on a template supplied by QQI. The comments are collated, summarised and disseminated to all team members by the co-ordinating reviewer in advance of the first team meeting.

### 3.2.2

When analysing the self-evaluation report, reviewers might reflect on the following:

» Who was involved in the development of the report?

» How was it approved?

» How has it been disseminated within the ETB?

» How well have the descriptive and analytical components been balanced in the report?

» Is there evidence of comprehensive self-analysis and self-reflection?

» Are conclusions supported by evidence?

» Is there evidence of the ETB using external references and benchmarks (national and international)?

» Is there evidence of compliance with any regulatory requirements (e.g. QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines)?

» Is there evidence of the use of data and narrative sources of information?

» Is any further information required in advance of the main review visit?

» What issues should the review team seek to explore in more detail with the ETB?

### 3.2.3

This initial analysis sets the groundwork for the first review team meeting, allowing the team to begin the process of identifying areas to be followed up on in the visits. Team members are, however, discouraged at the desk analysis stage from forming strong views or making final judgements. First impressions, whether positive or negative, are the basis for further discussions and evidence collection throughout the review. The initial list of comments and impressions is tested and addressed through the review process and any associated questions should be answered before the end of the main review visit.

## 3.3 REVIEW TEAM TRAINING & INITIAL MEETING

### 3.3.1

QQI will organise a training and briefing event for the review team prior to its initial meeting. The team will receive training in preparation for the review on:

» The role of QQI and the legislative background to the review;

» The key principles underpinning relevant QQI and sector policies;

» The aim, objectives and guiding principles of the inaugural review process;

» The steps involved in the inaugural review process;

» The specific roles of review team members; and

» A range of review techniques (e.g. open questioning, active listening, giving feedback, reviewing evidence).

### 3.3.2

A representative from SOLAS will brief the review team on ETB profiling data and information on the ETB's Strategic Performance Agreement.

### 3.3.3

Following the training, the review team will conduct an initial meeting to begin the process of collectively identifying general themes and issues for further investigation or clarification. The initial meeting will result in a shared list of issues that will form the basis of discussions between the review team and the ETB. This list will be refined throughout the review process as evidence emerges. It is recommended that responsibility for discrete areas of focus is allocated to specified review team members.

**3.3.4**

No later than four weeks prior to the initial meeting of the review team, the ETB is required to submit draft schedules for the planning visit and main review visit to QQI for consideration by the review team (sample schedules have been included at Annexes D and E as a guide). This will enable the team to begin early discussions on the types of meetings and attendees required and assist the ETB in securing an appropriate range of staff, learners and external stakeholders. When securing attendees for the main review visit, the ETB must ensure that all participants are fully aware that the schedule will not be finalised until the planning visit is complete and thus is likely to undergo some revisions due to the requirements of the review team.

## 3.4 THE PLANNING VISIT

**3.4.1**

Approximately six weeks before the main review visit, the chairperson of the review team and the co-ordinating reviewer will conduct a one-day on-site planning visit with the ETB[9]. Review team members will have been invited to provide comments on the self-evaluation report and any additional documentation required in advance of the planning visit.

**3.4.2**

The purposes of the planning visit include (but may not be restricted to):

» clarifying the ETB's existing approach and procedures for managing and monitoring the effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement, in accordance with its statutory requirements;

» ensuring that the self-evaluation report and any supporting documentation are well-matched to the process of review;

» agreeing the schedule of meetings and activities to be conducted throughout the main review visit;

» providing initial feedback on the self-evaluation report and identifying any specific additional qualitative or quantitative documentation that might be required in advance of, or during, the main review visit;

» identifying and agreeing the location for the main review visit and any facilities and resources that might be required by the review team.

**3.4.3**

The schedule of the planning visit is prepared by the ETB (in consultation with QQI on behalf of the review team) and should include a series of meetings with the ETB Chief Executive, FET Director/s, Quality Assurance Officer, the ETB review co-ordinator and members of the team that developed the self-evaluation report (see sample schedule at Annex D).

**3.4.4**

During the planning visit, the chairperson and co-ordinating reviewer are likely to identify additional documents that the review team wishes to access before the main review visit to enable the team to make evidence-based conclusions at the end of the review process. These should be provided to QQI as soon as possible (and no later than two weeks) following the planning visit for transmission to the review team.

**3.4.5**

The final session of the planning visit will be used to agree the outline structure of the main review visit, including confirming key groups of staff, learners and external stakeholders that the review team will meet. Depending on staff availability, the planning visit should typically be scheduled within the timeframe indicated in the sample schedule at Annex D and should conclude with a brief tour of the location in which the main review visit will be held.

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9   QQI will also be represented at the planning visit to ensure that the process is conducted in accordance with published criteria.

## 3.5 POST-PLANNING VISIT / MAIN REVIEW VISIT PREPARATION

### 3.5.1
A note of the key items discussed and agreed at the planning visit (including the final draft of the main review visit schedule) will be drawn up by the co-ordinating reviewer, in consultation with the chairperson, and shared with the rest of the review team and the ETB review co-ordinator. Any additional documentation to be supplied by the ETB will also be disseminated at this stage.

### 3.5.2
Following any changes to the main review visit schedule determined at the planning visit, the ETB review co-ordinator may need to amend logistical and personnel arrangements for the visit. The ETB review co-ordinator should liaise with QQI to confirm that all of these outcomes are addressed appropriately in advance of the main review visit and that the finalised schedule has been approved by the chairperson.

### 3.5.3
The ETB should begin preparation for the main review visit well in advance of the visit and to finalise arrangements as soon as possible

after the planning visit. Co-ordination of diaries can be highly complex and the attendance of participants in accordance with the detailed schedule should be confirmed at an early stage. Information on the profiles of review team members (supplied by QQI) should be shared with participants alongside a guidance note on the inaugural review process. Certain stakeholder groups (particularly learners) may also benefit from direct briefing on the process and should be offered opportunities to clarify their role or the nature of their discussion with the review team. Participants should also be aware that discussions may require a degree of flexibility where considered necessary by the review team (see 3.6.7). All participants should have full access to the self-evaluation report and any supporting material. Where any participant requires specific supports or accommodations to participate in the main review visit, it is the responsibility of the ETB to arrange these. The ETB review co-ordinator should advise the co-ordinating reviewer of any such requirements or arrangements.

## 3.6 THE MAIN REVIEW VISIT

### 3.6.1
The main review visit will be used by the review team to seek and consider evidence on the ways in which the ETB has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the ToR. The main review visit will thus have a number of key functions:

» to enable the review team to share, face-to-face, the impressions gained from the pre-visit information;

» to explore and gather evidence, in meetings and interviews with the key stakeholders, about the current state of quality assurance and enhancement at the ETB;

» to identify any areas of good practice to be commended and to identify any recommendations for improvement;

» to compile information and produce material to be used in the draft report; and

» to formulate the review team's preliminary findings and communicate these.

### 3.6.2
The main review visit will not normally be less than, nor exceed, five days in duration and will follow the programme agreed by the chairperson following the planning visit. Any proposed amendments to the main review visit schedule thereafter should be referred to QQI as soon as possible and no later than ten working days in advance of the main review visit. While review teams will endeavour to adhere to the agreed schedule, the ETB is asked to remain flexible and to accommodate any last-minute scheduling changes that may arise throughout the course of the main review visit. It is recommended that the ETB maintains the main review schedule on its website and that a link is provided to all participants in the main review visit (including

external representatives), advising that most up-to-date version will be available at this location.

## REVIEW PARTICIPANTS

### 3.6.3

The main review visit schedule should be designed to provide the review team with an opportunity to meet a diverse group of staff (academic and non-academic), learners from across the ETB, and external stakeholders. These should include:

| |
| --- |
| » The ETB Chief Executive |
| » The FET Director/s |
| » The QA Officer and members of the QA team |
| » The self-evaluation steering group |
| » Members of relevant governance bodies |
| » Members of the ETB's FET QA oversight body, e.g. Quality Council or equivalent |
| » Heads of ETB centres |
| » Staff, learners and external stakeholders that have engaged in QA development and enhancement processes within the ETB (e.g. working groups to develop procedures, communities of practice etc.) |
| » Staff, learners and external stakeholders that have engaged in or undergone internal review/self-evaluation processes (e.g. programme, centre or unit reviews) |
| » Staff from ETB support services (e.g. Guidance Counselling, Libraries, learner support services) |
| » Staff from corporate ETB functions (e.g. HR, Finance, IT, Communications & Marketing) |
| » A diverse selection of ETB learners (including representatives of different service and centre types, programmes and disciplines. This should include learners pursuing programmes with 'second providers' and those undertaking work-based learning/work placements) |
| » Representatives of ETB 'second providers' |
| » Representatives of external stakeholders (e.g. employers, regional skills fora, community providers, local projects with which the ETB is engaged, local higher education institutions, representatives of other awarding bodies). |

### 3.6.4

The proposed main review visit schedule should be accompanied by a brief rationale for the review team as to why and how stakeholders (particularly learners) have been identified to participate in the main review visit. With the exception of some members of the senior management team and the ETB review co-ordinator, the ETB should avoid the review team meeting ETB staff members more than once unless otherwise requested by the review team. The ETB should seek to ensure that participants reflect a wide range of backgrounds, disciplines, experience and seniority. The team will generally seek to meet staff in separate, parallel or consecutive meetings to those conducted with senior management.

### 3.6.5

To assist the chairperson to manage each meeting and ensure that all attendees have an opportunity to contribute to each discussion, it is recommended that the number of attendees per meeting is limited to a maximum of eight[10]. Ideally there should be between six and eight attendees per meeting (unless the proposed format – e.g. a word café approach – necessitates otherwise). All participants should be prepared to have an open and honest exchange with the review team.

## CONDUCT OF THE REVIEW

### 3.6.6

Throughout the main review visit, the review team and the ETB are asked to create an atmosphere of genuine dialogue. To this end, questioning and discussions within meetings will be fair, courteous and constructive, but also inquisitive, focusing on the collation and testing of evidence. Open, honest and constructive dialogue is essential if the review team is to gain a true and accurate understanding of the ETB and its approach to embedding a culture of quality.

### 3.6.7

Each meeting will be opened and closed by the review team chairperson. At the start of each meeting, the chairperson will provide a brief introduction to the review team and the nature of the inaugural review process to set the context for the discussion. The chairperson will confirm that,

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10   For each session, the ETB is asked to provide nameplates for all participants.

in order to triangulate information throughout the main review visit, the review team may ask questions and opinions on a wide range of topics that might be outside of the topic set for the specific session but which nonetheless fall within the scope of the overall review.

### 3.6.8

The chairperson will seek to ensure that the main review visit schedule is adhered to and that meetings begin and end promptly at the appointed time. S/he will advise that the discussion will be moved on if time is short or if sufficient (or insufficient) information and evidence have been obtained on a particular topic area. If there is essential unfinished business, the review team may seek to revisit it at a subsequent meeting.

### 3.6.9

The review team will wish to ensure that all participants in meetings have an opportunity to speak and that meetings are not dominated by a few individuals. Reviewers will need to confirm that views obtained are accurate and representative of the majority of participants. If conflicting opinions or experiences emerge within a meeting and there is insufficient time to cross-reference or further explore the matter, the chairperson will confirm that the issue will either be addressed or tested in subsequent meetings or the review report will confirm inconsistencies and outline the reasons for inconsistencies with reference to the specific session of the review visit.

### 3.6.10

Evidence-gathering must be thorough, monitored and documented. In advance of the main review visit, review team members will have agreed respective areas of responsibility and the profile of questions to be asked during each session: this will ensure that the key requirements are covered and that evidence from each meeting is gathered systematically and monitored. Reviewers will be asked to ensure that by the end of each meeting they have obtained new information or gathered sufficient evidence to contribute to the findings, commendations and recommendations that will be presented in the review report. Throughout

the main review visit, the co-ordinating reviewer will record the outcome of each meeting and log the evidence (written or oral) gathered in respect of each of the areas to be covered in the review report (see chapter 4). Consistency in recording the evidence collected will assist in preparing the review report and it is recommended that a basic draft of the report findings is prepared by the end of the main review visit.

### 3.6.11

QQI representatives may attend meetings during the main review visit to ensure the robustness of the inaugural review process and confirm that the review team's conduct is consistent with the process and in line with criteria.

### FINAL WRAP-UP MEETING/ORAL REPORT

### 3.6.12

The final meeting on the last day of the main review visit will be led by the review team chairperson. It will take the form of a brief oral presentation and will provide the ETB with an overview of the review team's preliminary conclusions, key findings, commendations and recommendations. Ideally, the ETB attendees will include the Chief Executive, FET Director/s, members of the senior management team, the self-evaluation steering group, a group of learners and the ETB review co-ordinator.

### 3.6.13

The wrap-up meeting is not an opportunity for the ETB to debate or dispute the team's draft findings but to gain closure to the process and an understanding of the key aspects of the review report that will be formally submitted several weeks after the main review visit. All findings shared at this stage are confidential and informal. An overview of the findings may – with the chairperson's approval – be shared internally with the ETB stakeholders who participated in the review to thank them for their engagement in the process and to give some initial feedback and closure. However, it must be clear that the review findings, commendations and recommendations cannot be formally communicated by the ETB until the review report is formally signed-off.

# 04 — THE REVIEW REPORT

### 4.1.1

The review report sets out the findings of the review team. The content for the written report will be prepared and agreed by the whole team at the end of the review process. On the final day of the main review visit, the team will be asked by QQI to confirm that the review procedures used have provided adequate evidence to support the team's findings and recommendations on the ETB's procedures and practices in relation to the objectives and criteria set out in the ToR.

### 4.1.2

The report is designed to support consistent, robust and independent public assurances, supported by appropriate evidence, that the ETB has in place procedures and processes that ensure the delivery of educational experiences of the highest standard. The report will be drafted to take due account of the different needs and interests of internal and external stakeholders in engaging with and understanding the outcomes of the process.

**THE DRAFTING PROCESS**

### 4.1.3

The review team must ensure that the review findings are evidence-based, accountable and documented. It will draw upon the notes of discussions held in advance of, and during, the main review visit as the basis for the review report. The review chairperson may decide to assign aspects of the report to individual reviewers or pairs of team members to draft. When drafting the report, care should be taken to ensure that:

» the report is not overly-descriptive;

» the report does not comment on individuals;

» feedback is offered constructively;

» findings are not excessively subtle but are clear and direct;

» any issues identified in the conclusion section of the report have been fully discussed in the relevant section of the main text; and

» recommendations are not overly-prescriptive in specifying how an identified area for improvement should be addressed.

### 4.1.4

The co-ordinating reviewer is responsible for co-ordinating the preparation of the report, integrating inputs from review team members to ensure a consistent and coherent narrative. Given the scale of this task, each reviewer should remain accessible, contributing commentary and advising on drafts and amendments as required, and in accordance with the specified deadlines, until the report has been finalised. The report will be signed off by the chairperson, having been agreed with all review team members within the timeline determined by QQI. The co-ordinating reviewer will submit the draft review report to QQI on behalf of the review team.

**THE REVIEW REPORT STRUCTURE**

### 4.1.5

A template will be provided to the review team for the completion of the report, which will be based on the structure outlined below.

| SECTION | CONTENT |
|---------|---------|
| Introduction & Context[11] | Summary information on the ETB's size, mission, strategic aims and direction. |
| | A short statement of contextual factors at the time of the inaugural review – including recent key developments within the ETB as well as summary programme, learner and staff information. |
| | A short statement on the ETB's approach to quality assurance and enhancement, including context on any external regulatory requirements. |
| Methodology used to Prepare the Self-Evaluation Report | Key features of the self-evaluation report development process and the self-evaluation steering group, including information on the breakdown of membership of this group and the methods employed for securing widespread ownership of the self-evaluation report by stakeholders. |
| | A commentary on the self-evaluation report and the way the ETB has engaged with the inaugural review process. |
| Quality Assurance and Enhancement | Each of the objectives in the ToR will be addressed separately in a clearly labelled sub-section. The findings for each objective will consist of a statement/series of statements supported by the evidence on which the finding is based. Conclusions will include:<br>» commendations on areas of good practice; and<br>» recommendations based on the identification of any shortfalls or inefficiencies in processes, procedures or their delivery and areas for improvement. Recommendations should be within the ambit of the ETB and should be structured so as indicate the urgency of the response required.<br>If the review team has identified what it considers to be any significant cause for concern in the ETB's performance with respect to the relevant criteria, the nature and extent of its concerns will be stated clearly. |
| Conclusions | The key findings and recommendations of the preceding section will be extracted and clearly labelled in a conclusions section. The review team should also assign a degree of prioritisation of its findings by identifying the top five commendations and recommendations.<br>Based on these findings, the review team will also provide overarching specific qualitative statements regarding each objective, based on the team's consideration of the findings in relation to that objective as a whole. There will be specific qualitative statements regarding:<br>» the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation;<br>» the extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (including an explicit qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's *Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training[12]*); and<br>» the enhancement of quality. |

11  The details included in the Introduction and Context section may be garnered from the provider profile, the self-evaluation report, the meetings during the main review visit and from additional supporting documentation provided by the ETB.

12  https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf

**FACTUAL ACCURACY**

**4.1.6**

The co-ordinating reviewer will submit the draft report to QQI, which will ensure that the report provides sufficient evidence to substantiate the key findings and is in keeping within the ToR for the process. QQI will send the draft report to the ETB, which will be asked to comment on any factual accuracy issues within one week. It is important that the ETB is aware that the accuracy checking process should be precisely that: it is not an opportunity to re-write the team's report. Additionally, as the process is an evidence-based one, the review report can only include comment on evidence seen by the review team before or during the main review visit. The ETB is invited to identify accuracy changes and comments for consideration by the team, particularly where numerical data, committee names and operational titles are presented. In most cases data used will have been obtained from the self-evaluation report. A template to assist the ETB in the factual accuracy process will be provided by QQI.

**ETB RESPONSE**

**4.1.7**

QQI will send the final review report to the ETB, which will be invited to provide a formal response on behalf of the ETB (ideally no longer than 2 pages in length) that will be considered, alongside the report, by QQI's internal governance structures and included in the published document. The ETB will have two weeks from receipt of the finalised review report in which to provide a response. However, it should begin drafting its response alongside the factual accuracy checking exercise to enable internal consultation and approval as required.

**PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT**

**4.1.8**

The final report (including the formal ETB response) will be considered by QQI's governance structures for approval. Following approval of the report's publication, QQI will provide an electronic copy of the review report to the ETB and both parties will publish the document on their respective websites. QQI will also supply the ETB with hard copies of the report that can be shared with internal and external key stakeholders. A small supply of hard copies will be retained by QQI.

# 05 REVIEW FOLLOW-UP

## ACTION PLAN

### 5.1.1

One month after the publication of the review report, the ETB will submit to QQI an action plan to address the issues identified by the ETB in its self-evaluation report and by the review team in its review report. The format of the action plan will be in accordance with a template provided by QQI. This will include a commentary on how the review findings and recommendations have been discussed and disseminated throughout the ETB's governance and wider organisational structures and networks. The action plan will be published on the QQI and ETB websites.

## PROGRESS REPORT

### 5.1.2

One year after submission of the action plan, the ETB will be asked to submit a follow-up report on progress against the plan and how it is addressing the outcomes of the review. The format of the follow-up report will also be in accordance with a template provided by QQI. The report should identify the range of strategic and logistical developments and decisions that have occurred within the ETB since the publication of the review report and should address each of the key findings and recommendations that the reviewers presented. The follow-up report will also be published by QQI and the ETB. Significant milestones in the follow-up report, along with reflections and learnings from the inaugural review process, should also be included in routine quality reporting to QQI.

## EVALUATION

### 5.1.3

Formal and informal mechanisms for gaining feedback on the review process will operate throughout the process. The ETB review co-ordinator will normally be the conduit for feedback from the ETB to QQI. Any feedback from the review team will usually be directed to QQI via the co-ordinating reviewer. Following publication of the review report, the ETB and each member of the review team will be asked to provide structured feedback on the review process through a questionnaire.

## DISSEMINATION AND ENHANCEMENT

### 5.1.4

In addition to the sixteen ETB review reports, a sectoral report will be published outlining system-level observations and findings with a view to informing strategic decision-making on quality assurance within the sector[13]. Effective practice identified through the review process will also be used, in consultation with the relevant ETBs, as the basis for QQI dissemination and enhancement activities (publications, conferences, workshops etc.) to support the ongoing development of ETB quality assurance.

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13   The ToR for the sectoral report are available at: https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Institutional-Reviews07.aspx

# ANNEXES

# ANNEX A
# REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

## 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THE REVIEW

### 1.1

QQI established *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* for all providers in April 2016, and *Sector-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards* (ETBs) in May 2017[14]. These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

### 1.2

The education and training boards were established under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. They are statutory providers with responsibility for education and training, youth work and other statutory functions, and operate and manage a range of centres administering and providing adult and further education and training (FET). ETBs also administer secondary and primary education through schools and engage in a range of non-accredited provision. These areas are not subject to quality assurance regulation by QQI.

### 1.3

In 2018, all sixteen ETBs completed re-engagement with QQI. Following this process each ETB established its quality assurance policy and procedures in accordance with section 30 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) (henceforth 'the 2012 Act'). QQI recognises that those policies and procedures are reflective of the evolving and developmental nature of quality assurance within the ETB sector as it continues to integrate the legacy body processes.

### 1.4

As outlined in QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines, quality and its assurance are the responsibility of the provider, i.e. an ETB, and review and self-evaluation of quality is a fundamental element of an ETB's quality assurance system. A provider's external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review of quality assurance by QQI. QQI review functions are set out in various sections of the 2012 Act. The reviews relate to QQI's obligation under Section 27(b) of the 2012 Act (to establish procedures for the review by QQI of the effectiveness and implementation of a provider's quality assurance procedures) and to section 34 of the 2012 Act (the external review by QQI of a provider's quality assurance procedures).

### 1.5

An external review of quality assurance has not previously been undertaken for the ETBs, either through QQI or former legacy awarding body processes. QQI is cognisant of the ETBs' current organisational context in which the establishment of comprehensive and integrated quality assurance systems is an

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14   https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf
     https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Sector%20specific%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20ETBs.pdf

ongoing process. A primary function of the reviews will thus be to inform the future development of quality assurance and enhancement activities within the organisations. Following the completion of the sixteen review reports, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying systemic observations and findings.

### 1.6

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with SOLAS (the state organisation responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring further education and training in Ireland) in carrying out a review of education and training boards. This will take the form of consultation with SOLAS on the Terms of Reference for the review and the provision of contextual briefing by SOLAS to review teams.

## 2   PURPOSES

### 2.1

QQI has specific multi-dimensional purposes for its quality assurance reviews. The *Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards*[15] outlines six purposes for this review process. Those purposes, and the ways in which they will be achieved and measured, are as follows:

| PURPOSE | ACHIEVED AND MEASURED THROUGH |
|---|---|
| 1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs | » Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews.<br>» Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases of the review.<br>» Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them.<br>» Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures.<br>» Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB. |
| 2. To provide feedback to ETBs about organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance. | » Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e. how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance.<br>» Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level.<br>» Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards.<br>» Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures. |
| 3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness. | » Adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent.<br>» Publication of clear timescales and terms of reference for review.<br>» Evaluating, as part of the review, ETB reporting on quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible.<br>» Publication of the individual ETB reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences.<br>» Publication of sectoral findings and observations. |

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15   https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Inaugural%20Quality%20Assurance%20Review%20of%20Education%20and%20Training%20Boards%20Policy.pdf

| PURPOSE | ACHIEVED AND MEASURED THROUGH |
|---|---|
| 4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs. | » Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings.<br>» The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning. |
| 5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice. | » Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB.<br>» Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence.<br>» Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context.<br>» Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation. |
| 6. To provide an opportunity for ETBs to articulate their stage of development, mission and objectives and demonstrate the quality assurance of their provision, both individually and as a sector. | » Publication of self-evaluation reports, conducted with input from ETB learners and wider stakeholder groups.<br>» Publication of the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences. |

# 3  OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW

### 3.1

The core objective of the external review is **to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of an ETB's quality assurance procedures**.  As this is the inaugural review, it will have a particular emphasis on the arrangements established to date to support the operation of the quality assurance system. Recognising that the development and implementation of an ETB-wide quality assurance system and procedural framework is an ongoing process, the review will also have a forward-looking dimension and will explore the ETB's plans and infrastructure to support the ongoing development of these systems. The review will thus examine the following:

### OBJECTIVE 1: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

Evaluate the comprehensive oversight arrangements and transparent decision-making structures for the ETB's education and training and related activities within and across all service provision (for example further education colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers, collaborative partnerships/arrangements).

The governance and quality management systems would be expected to address:

| | INDICATIVE MATTERS TO BE EXPLORED |
|---|---|
| a) The ETB's mission and strategy | » How/do the ETB's quality assurance arrangements contribute to the fulfilment of these?<br>» Is the learner experience consistent with this mission? |
| b) Structures and terms of reference for the governance and management of quality assurance | » Are the arrangements sufficiently comprehensive and robust to ensure strong governance and management of operations (e.g. separation of responsibilities, externality, stakeholder input)?<br>» Is governance visible and transparent?<br>» Where multi-level arrangements exist (e.g. where responsibilities are invested in centre managers), is there sufficient clarity, co-ordination, corporate oversight of, and accountability for, these arrangements? |

| | INDICATIVE MATTERS TO BE EXPLORED |
|---|---|
| c) The documentation of quality assurance policy and procedures | » How effective are the arrangements for the development and approval of policies and procedures?<br>» Are policies and procedures coherent and comprehensive (do they incorporate all service types and awarding bodies?), robust and fit for purpose?<br>» Are policies and procedures systematically evaluated? |
| d) Staff recruitment, management and development | » How does the ETB assure itself as to the competence of its staff?<br>» How are professional standards maintained and enhanced?<br>» How are staff informed of developments impacting the organisation and how can they input to decision-making? |
| e) Programme development, approval and submission for validation | » What arrangements are in place to ensure alignment of programme development activity with strategic goals and regional needs?<br>» Are the arrangements for the approval and management of programme development robust, objective and transparent?<br>» What arrangements are in place to facilitate and oversee a comprehensive programme development process in advance of submission for validation (e.g. the conduct of research, inclusion of external expertise, writing learning outcomes, curricula etc.)?<br>» Are there structures in place to support collaborative programme development with other ETBs/providers? |
| f) Access, transfer and progression | » How does the ETB quality assure access, transfer and progression systematically across all programmes and services?<br>» Are there flexible learning pathways, respecting and attending to the diversity of learners?<br>» Are admissions, progression and recognition policies and processes clear and transparent for learners and implemented on a consistent basis? |
| g) Integrity and approval of learner results, including the operation and outcome of internal verification and external authentication processes | » What governance and oversight processes are in place to ensure the integrity of learner assessment and results?<br>» How does the ETB ensure that these arrangements provide for consistent decision-making and standards across services and centres? |
| h) Information and data management | » What arrangements are in place to ensure that data are reliable and secure?<br>» How are data utilised as part of the quality assurance system?<br>» What arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records (including, where relevant, the sharing of learner data with other providers on national apprenticeships)?<br>» How is compliance with data legislation ensured? |
| i) Public information and communications | » Is information on the quality assurance system, procedures and activities publicly available and regularly updated?<br>» What arrangements are in place to ensure that published information in relation to all provision (including by centres) is clear, accurate, up to date and easily accessible? |

**OBJECTIVE 2: TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

Evaluate the arrangements to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB and a high-quality learning experience for all learners. These will include:

| | INDICATIVE MATTERS TO BE EXPLORED |
|---|---|
| a) The learning environment | » How/is the quality of the learning experience monitored? <br> » How/are modes of delivery and pedagogical methods evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of learners? <br> » How is the quality of the learning experience of learners on work placements ensured? <br> » Is there evidence of enhancement in teaching and learning? |
| b) Assessment of learners | » How is the integrity, consistency and security of assessment instruments, methodologies, procedures and records ensured – including in respect of recognition of prior learning? <br> » How is the standard of assessment of learners on work placements ensured – particularly where these are undertaken by non-ETB staff? <br> » Do learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and are they given feedback on assessment? |
| c) Supports for learners | » How are support services planned and monitored to ensure that they meet the needs of learners? <br> » How does the ETB ensure consistency in the availability of appropriate supports to learners across different settings/regions? <br> » Are learners aware of the existence of supports? |

**OBJECTIVE 3: SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING & REVIEW**

Evaluate the arrangements for the monitoring, review and evaluation of, and reporting on, the ETB's education, training and related services (including through third-party arrangements) and the quality assurance system and procedures underpinning them. It will also reflect on how these processes are utilised to complete the quality cycle through the identification and promotion of effective practice and by addressing areas for improvement.  This will include:

| | INDICATIVE MATTERS TO BE EXPLORED |
|---|---|
| a) Self-evaluation, monitoring and review | » What are the processes for quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting? <br> » Are the processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including the self-evaluation report undertaken for the inaugural review) comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based? <br> » Is there evidence of strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of internal quality assurance reviews and monitoring (e.g. review reports, external authenticator reports, learner feedback reports etc.)? <br> » How is quality promoted and enhanced? |
| b) Programme monitoring and review | » How are programme delivery and outcomes monitored across multiple centres (including collection of feedback from learners/stakeholders)? <br> » Are mechanisms for periodic review of programmes comprehensive, inclusive and robust? <br> » Is there evidence that the outcome of programme monitoring and review informs programme modification and enhancement? <br> » Are the outputs of programme monitoring and review considered on a strategic basis by the ETB's governance bodies to inform decision-making? |

| | INDICATIVE MATTERS TO BE EXPLORED |
|---|---|
| c) Oversight, monitoring and review of relationships with external/ third parties (in particular, with contracted training providers, community training providers, and other collaborative provision). | » How does the ETB ensure the suitability of the external parties with which it engages?<br>» Is the nature of the arrangements with each external party published?<br>» Is the effectiveness of these arrangements monitored and reviewed through ETB governance?<br>» Does the ETB assess its impact within the region and local communities? |

### 3.2

In respect of each dimension, the review will:

» evaluate the effectiveness of the ETB's quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of further education, training, and related services;

» identify perceived gaps in the internal quality assurance mechanisms and the appropriateness, sufficiency, prioritisation and timeliness of planned measures to address them in the context of the ETB's current stage of development; and

» explore achievements and innovations in quality assurance and in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

### 3.3

Following consideration of the matters above, the review will:

» Provide a qualitative statement about the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation;

» Provide a statement about the extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (as listed at 3.4), to include an explicit qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's *Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training*[16];

» Provide a qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality; and

» Identify effective practice and recommendations for further improvement.

### 3.4

The implementation and effectiveness of the ETB's quality assurance arrangements will be considered in the context of the following criteria:

» The ETB's mission and objectives for quality assurance;

» QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*;

» QQI's *Sector-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards*;

» QQI's *Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes*[17];

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16   https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf

17   https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Apprenticeship%20Programmes%20QAG%20Topic-Specific.pdf

» QQI's *Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning*[18];

» QQI's *Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training*;

» QQI's *Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training*[19]; and

» Relevant European guidelines and practice on quality and quality assurance.

# 4   THE REVIEW TEAM

### 4.1

QQI will appoint a review team to conduct the review. Review teams are composed of peer reviewers who are learners; leaders and staff from comparable providers; and external representatives including employer and civic representatives. The size of the team will depend on the size and complexity of the ETB but in general will comprise five or six persons. A reviewer may participate in more than one ETB review.

### 4.2

QQI will identify an appropriate team of reviewers for each review who are independent of the ETB with the appropriate skills and experience required to perform their tasks.  This will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, teaching and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of its review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows[20]:

**CHAIRPERSON**

### 4.3

The chairperson is a full member of the team. Their role is to provide tactical leadership and to ensure that the work of the team is conducted in a professional, impartial and fair manner, and in compliance with the Terms of Reference. The chairperson's functions include:

» Leading the conduct of the review and ensuring that proceedings remain focussed.

» Co-ordinating the work of reviewers.

» Fostering open and respectful exchanges of opinion and ensuring that the views of all participants are valued and considered.

» Facilitating the emergence of evidence-based team decisions (ideally based on consensus).

» Contributing to, and overseeing the production of, the review report within the timeline agreed with QQI, approving amendments or convening additional meetings if required.

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18   https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf

19   https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Initial_Validation_policy_7_10_13.pdf

20   Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's *Roles, Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.*

## CO-ORDINATING REVIEWER

### 4.4

The co-ordinating reviewer is a full member of the team. Their role is to capture the team's deliberations and decisions during the proceedings and express them clearly and accurately in the team report. It is vital that the co-ordinating reviewer ensures that sufficient evidence is provided in the report to support the team's recommendations. The role of the co-ordinating reviewer includes:

» Acting as the liaison between the review team and QQI; and, during the main review visit, between the review team and the ETB review co-ordinator.

» Maintaining records of discussions during the planning and main review visits.

» Co-ordinating the drafting of the review report in consultation with the team members and under the direction of the chairperson within the timeline agreed with QQI.

## ALL REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

### 4.5

The role of all review team members includes:

» Preparing for the review by reading and critically evaluating all written material.

» Investigating and testing claims made in the self-evaluation report and other ETB documents during the main review visit by speaking to a range of staff, learners and stakeholders.

» Contributing to the production of the review report, ensuring that their particular perspective and voice (i.e. learner, industry, stakeholder, international etc.) forms an integral part of the review.

» Following the individual ETB reviews, providing observations to inform the development of the sectoral report.

# 5   THE REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE

### 5.1

The key steps in the review process with indicative timelines are outlined below. Specific dates for each ETB review will be outlined by QQI in accordance with the published Review Schedule.

| STEP | ACTION | TIMEFRAME |
|---|---|---|
| Preparation | Preparation of a provider profile by each ETB (e.g. outlining mission; strategic objectives; local context; data on staff profiles; recent developments; key challenges). | 6-9 months before first main review visit |
| | Provision of ETB data by SOLAS (e.g. data on learner profiles; local context; strategic direction). | |
| | Establishment of review teams and identification of ETBs for review by each review team, selected in accordance with the ETB provider profiles and data and in consultation with ETBs on potential conflicts of interest. | |
| Self-Evaluation Report | Preparation and publication by ETBs of individual, inclusive, whole-of-organisation self-evaluations of how effectively they assure the quality of teaching, learning and service activities. | 11 weeks before main review visit |

| STEP | ACTION | TIMEFRAME |
|------|--------|-----------|
| Desk Review | Desk review of the self-evaluation report by the review team. | Before initial meeting |
| Initial Meeting | An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training, briefing from SOLAS, discussion of preliminary impressions and identification of any additional documentation required. | 5 weeks after submission of self-evaluation report<br><br>6 weeks before main review visit |
| Planning Visit | A visit to the ETB by the chair and co-ordinating reviewer of the review team to receive information about the self-evaluation process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss any additional information requests. | 5 weeks after receipt of self-evaluation report<br><br>6 weeks before main review visit |
| Main Review Visit | A visit to the ETB by the review team to receive and consider evidence from ETB staff, learners and stakeholders in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference. | 11 weeks following receipt of self-evaluation report |
| Review Report | Preparation of draft review report by review team. | 6-8 weeks after main review visit |
| | Draft report sent to ETB by QQI for a check of factual accuracy. | 1 week following receipt by QQI |
| | ETB responds with any factual accuracy corrections. | 1 week following receipt |
| | Final report sent to ETB. | 1 week following receipt of any factual accuracy corrections |
| | Response to review submitted by ETB. | 2 weeks after receipt of final report |
| Outcomes | QQI considers findings of review report and ETB response through governance processes. | Next available meeting of QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee |
| | Review report is published with ETB response. | |
| Follow-Up | Preparation of an action plan by ETB. | 1 month after publication of the review report |
| | QQI seeks feedback from ETB on experience of review. | 6 weeks after publication of the review report |
| | One-year follow-up report by ETB to QQI. This (and any subsequent follow-up) may be integrated into annual reports to QQI. | 1 year after submission of the action plan |
| | Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through annual reporting and dialogue processes. | Continuous |

# ANNEX B
# PROVIDER PROFILE

ETBs are required to provide a provider profile to QQI. The provider profile should include the following information:

## X-ETB PROVIDER PROFILE[21]

**1  BACKGROUND**

A brief paragraph outlining the establishment of the ETB and the legacy bodies incorporated.

**2  MISSION, VALUES, STRATEGIC FOCUS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

A brief outline of the ETB's mission, values and strategic goals.

**3  GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES**

A brief outline/diagrams of governance and management structures, including for FET QA and the governance/management relationships with FET centres.

**4  APPROACH TO QUALITY**

A brief outline of how quality assurance features in the work of the ETB and the key features of, and influences on, the ETB's approach to quality assurance.

**5  REGIONAL PROFILE**

| SECTOR | NO. OF EMPLOYERS IN ETB REGION | NO. EMPLOYED IN ETB REGION | NO. OF VACANCIES IN ETB REGION |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

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21  Information in the provider profile should refer only to ETB FET provision, i.e. excluding information relating to primary schools etc.

## 6  PROVISION PROFILE[22]

a)  ETB Centres

| NAME OF CENTRE | CENTRE TYPE[23] | F/T LEARNERS (2019) | | P/T LEARNERS (2019) | | TOTAL LEARNERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | NO. | % | NO. | % | NO. | %[24] |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | |

b)  Contracted/External Provision with which the ETB is Engaged

| PROVIDER/PROVISION TYPE[25] | NO. OF CENTRES/ LOCATIONS | F/T LEARNERS (2019) | | P/T LEARNERS (2019) | | TOTAL LEARNERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | NO. | % | NO. | % | NO. | %[26] |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | |

c)  ETB Services[27]

| SERVICE | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| E.g. Guidance Counselling | |
| | |

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22  Requested data can be presented either in tabular or graphic form but the latter should include figures.

23  For example, College of Further Education, Training Centre etc. ETBs should populate the table as appropriate to reflect their provision.

24  Percentage of overall learner total in this table.

25  For example, Community Provider, Co-operation Hours, Local Training Initiatives, Specialist Training Providers etc. ETBs should populate the table as appropriate to reflect the nature of contracted/external provision with which they are engaged.

26  Percentage of overall learner total in this table.

27  E.g. Guidance Counselling, Literacy/Numeracy etc.

d) ETB Provision by Field of Learning

| FIELDS OF LEARNING | BENEFICIARIES 2017 | BENEFICIARIES 2018 | BENEFICIARIES 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, Horticulture and Mariculture | | | |
| Animal Science | | | |
| Arts & Crafts | | | |
| Built Environment | | | |
| Business, Administration | | | |
| Engineering | | | |
| Engineering (Electrical) | | | |
| Engineering (IT) | | | |
| Engineering (Mechanical) | | | |
| Engineering (Transport) | | | |
| Entrepreneurship | | | |
| Financial Services | | | |
| Food and Beverage | | | |
| Hairdressing, Beauty and Complementary Therapies | | | |
| Health, Family & other Social Services | | | |
| Information Technology | | | |
| Management | | | |
| Manufacturing | | | |
| Media, Graphics, Communications | | | |
| Natural Resources | | | |
| Research and Education-Training | | | |
| Sales & Marketing | | | |
| Science and Technology | | | |
| Security Guarding & Emergency Services | | | |
| Sport and Leisure | | | |
| Tourism | | | |
| Transport, Distribution & Logistics | | | |
| Web Development & Design | | | |
| Total | | | |

e)  ETB Provision by NFQ Level

| NFQ LEVEL[28] | BENEFICIARIES 2017 | BENEFICIARIES 2018 | BENEFICIARIES 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| Total | | | |

f)  Awarding Bodies

| AWARDING BODY | AWARDS 2017 | | AWARDS 2018 | | AWARDS 2019 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NO. | % | NO. | % | NO. | % |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | |

## 7  LEARNER PROFILE

a)  Gender Profile

| LEARNER GENDER | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | | | |
| Male | | | |
| Other/Not Specified | | | |
| Total | | | |

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28  Where provision is offered at other NFQ levels, add additional rows as required.

b) Age Profile

| LEARNER AGE | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| <15 | | | |
| 15-19 | | | |
| 20-24 | | | |
| 25-29 | | | |
| 30-34 | | | |
| 35-39 | | | |
| 40-44 | | | |
| 45-49 | | | |
| 50-54 | | | |
| 55-59 | | | |
| 60-65 | | | |
| >65 | | | |
| Total | | | |

c) Nationality Profile[29]

| REGION | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| E.g. Ireland | | | |
| GB | | | |
| Europe | | | |
| Africa | | | |
| Asia | | | |
| North America | | | |
| Oceania | | | |
| South America | | | |
| Unknown | | | |
| Total | | | |

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29  The region breakdown is provided for example. ETBs may adopt different region classifications as appropriate to their own information systems.

## 8   STAFFING PROFILE

a)   Staffing Overview[30]

| ROLE | TOTAL 2017 | TOTAL 2018 | TOTAL 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| E.g. Teacher/Tutor/ Instructor FTE | | | |
| Guidance Counsellor FTE | | | |
| Administrative FTE | | | |
| Corporate (Finance/IT etc.) FTE | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Total | | | |

b)   Teacher: Learner Ratio

   i)      Overall

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher/Tutor/Instructor FTE | | | |
| Learners | | | |
| Ratio | | | |

   ii)     By Service/Centre Type[31]

| | 2017 | | | | 2018 | | | | 2019 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SERVICE/ CENTRE TYPE A | SERVICE/ CENTRE TYPE B | SERVICE/ CENTRE TYPE C | SERVICE/ CENTRE TYPE D | | | | | | | | |
| Teacher/Tutor/ Instructor FTE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Learners | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ratio | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## 9.   COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS[32]

a)   National Agencies

b)   Regional Partners

c)   Other Partnerships/Networks

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30   The roles listed are provided for example. ETBs may adopt different role classifications as appropriate to their own information systems.

31   ETBs may determine centre/service classifications as appropriate to their own information systems.

32   A brief outline of ETB collaborations and partnerships.

# ANNEX C
# SELF-EVALUATION REPORT FORMAT GUIDE

It is the responsibility of the ETB to determine the most appropriate format for its own self-evaluation report, taking into account its particular profile and context and the ToR for the review. A streamlined approach to the self-evaluation report documentation is encouraged to ensure a readable report for the review team and to maximise the time spent on reflection, evaluation and capturing lessons learned. Some practical tips for an effective self-evaluation report are:

» a simple indexing system (avoiding overly elaborate numbering systems);
» a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms;
» clear cross-references to additional documents and hyperlinks[33] to avoid unnecessary repetition;
» diagrams and flow charts to explain structures, processes and reporting lines; and
» an evaluative summary at the end of each section.

A sample format is provided below for reference. However, the ETB is not bound by this approach.

| REPORT SECTION | DESCRIPTION |
| --- | --- |
| Foreword | A statement on the self-evaluation report by the ETB Chief Executive. |
| Contents | A list of contents, annexes, figures and tables. |
| Glossary and Abbreviations | A list of definitions of terms and acronyms. |
| ETB Context | The ETB could reference the provider profile in this section, providing a brief analysis of key trends in some of the data provided (e.g. regional skills needs or the ETB's learner population) and the implications of such for the ETB's strategic direction and quality assurance system.<br><br>Any additional contextual information the ETB considers important in the context of self-evaluation, e.g. the quality culture within the ETB. |
| Self-evaluation Report | A brief description of the process and methodologies adopted for the development of the self-evaluation report, evidencing the inclusive and consultative nature of the process adopted. |

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33  Hyperlinks should be tested outside ETB networks to ensure that reviewers can access the material remotely.

| REPORT SECTION | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality | a) The ETB's Mission and Strategy<br>» Description:<br>~ An outline of the QA arrangements that are aligned to and support these, and why they have been adopted.<br>» Evaluation<br>~ An evaluation of whether the QA components described are being implemented fully and consistently (including reference to examples to illustrate this).<br>~ An evaluation of how effective (or otherwise) the ETB considers these QA arrangements to be in supporting the achievement of strategic objectives (including reference to data/examples to illustrate this).<br>» Conclusion<br>~ Identification of effective practice, challenges and potential future enhancements.<br><br>b) Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance & Management of Quality Assurance<br>» Description:<br>~ An outline of what these are and why they have been adopted.<br>» Evaluation<br>~ An evaluation of whether the components described are being implemented fully and consistently (including reference to examples to illustrate this).<br>~ An evaluation of how effective (or otherwise) the ETB considers these arrangements to be (including reference to data/examples to illustrate this).<br>» Conclusion<br>~ Identification of effective practice, challenges and potential future enhancements.<br><br>c) The Documentation of Quality Assurance Policy & Procedures<br>» Description:<br>~ An outline of what these are (possibly including an annex with a list of all policies and procedures and links to them).<br>~ A description of the ETB's approach to the governance and management of policy/procedural development, approval and review and why it has adopted this approach.<br>» Evaluation<br>~ An evaluation of whether the components described are being implemented fully and consistently (including reference to examples to illustrate this).<br>~ An evaluation of how effective (or otherwise) the ETB considers these arrangements to be (including reference to data/examples to illustrate this).<br>» Conclusion<br>~ Identification of effective practice, challenges and potential future enhancements.<br><br>d) Staff Recruitment, Management and Development<br><br>e) Programme Development, Approval, and Submission for Validation<br><br>f) Access, Transfer and Progression<br><br>g) Integrity and Approval of Learner Results<br><br>h) Information and Data Management<br><br>i) Public Information and Communications<br>(Sections d)-i) structured broadly in line with those illustrated above as appropriate to the relevant heading)<br><br>j) Conclusion<br>» A brief evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the ETB's arrangements for the governance and management of quality assurance.<br>» A summary of the intended future direction. |

| REPORT SECTION | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment | a) The Learning Environment<br>b) Assessment of Learners<br>c) Supports for Learners<br>d) Conclusion<br>(Each section structured broadly in line with those illustrated above as appropriate to the relevant heading). |
| Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review | a) Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review<br>b) Programme Monitoring & Review<br>c) Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/Third Parties<br>d) Conclusion<br>(Each section structured broadly in line with those illustrated above as appropriate to the relevant heading). |
| Conclusions | An overall summary of the findings of the self-evaluation and of the areas identified for improvement. |
| Appendices | List of appendices. |

The sources of evidence and practice which will underpin the self-evaluation may include:

» Information on the self-evaluation process (e.g. membership of the self-evaluation oversight group, the schedule of stakeholder consultation/engagement/communications etc.; evidence of consideration of the process by governance bodies)

» The current strategic plan, annual report and recent strategic performance agreement;

» Evidence of monitoring against KPIs

» Organograms and maps;

» Terms of reference for internal governance and quality assurance bodies (including membership details) and minutes of meetings;

» Roles and responsibilities of ETB personnel;

» Current quality assurance policies, procedures, guidelines and operational documents;

» Evidence of how developments in the QA system are disseminated and communicated to key stakeholders (both internal and external);

» Flow charts for key learner processes, e.g. assessment appeals, learner complaints, seeking reasonable accommodation in an examination;

» Details of formal and informal partnerships and any programmes offered in collaboration (associated contracts and/or memoranda of agreement should be available on request);

» Evidence of integration between QA processes and planning systems and/or operational management;

» Data and metrics such as progression/completion rates and graduate destination information;

» Evidence of ongoing quality assurance activities such as programme approval and reviews and associated governance oversight;

» Evidence of ETB-led, regional or national quality enhancement initiatives;

» Evidence of planning for and monitoring of support services (including guidance);

» Evidence of planning for and monitoring of facilities and physical resources;

» Funding figures and resources for teaching;

» Lists of staff qualifications and staff publications;

» Staffing policies and evidence pertaining to strategic ETB staff planning, development and performance management;

» A sample of internal monitoring reports representing a cross-section of monitoring across the ETB, including the range of information considered and the usual level of analysis and follow-up undertaken;

» An analysis of external authenticator reports for preceding academic years, including evidence on where and by whom they were considered within the ETB (e.g. meeting minutes) and responses to the issues identified;

» An analysis of learner feedback for preceding academic years including evidence on where and by whom they were considered within the ETB (e.g. meeting minutes) and responses to the issues identified;

» Learner surveys, staff surveys, graduate surveys and external stakeholder surveys;

» Evidence of the corporate culture and ethos in respect of quality (e.g. staff attitudes survey);

» Evidence of actions taken as a result of feedback, indicators or outcomes of reviews;

» Short case studies to demonstrate a process in relation to a particular objective or showcase effective practice.

It is of benefit for the review team to have paper trails of key QA processes to allow them to confirm that they have seen evidence of QA policies operating in practice. Examples of these are listed below and may be requested by the review team:

| | |
|---|---|
| Committee Papers | A selection of papers (agendas and minutes) from key governance committees (including on QA, programme development, teaching and learning etc.) that demonstrate the link between quality assurance, decision-making, the stated mission of the ETB and the use of evidence to inform decision making. |
| Programme Development and Review | A series of documents tracing the trajectory of a programme from identification of need through initial design, approval, monitoring and review. This may include programme documentation, external authenticator documents, other sources of feedback and papers relating to the various governance fora through which the programme has progressed. Examples of the use of quantitative and qualitative sources of information to inform findings and decision-making may also be provided. |
| External Authentication | An example of the paper trail relating to the external authentication of a programme (or more than one programme if different approaches are employed for different programmes/settings) – including a paper trail of guidelines on the appointment of external authenticators, a copy of any guidance/briefing notes given, review reports completed by the external authenticator, copies of how the programme/centre/ETB responded to these comments, and minutes showing how the external authenticator comments were fed through the internal governance system. |
| Learner Voice | Examples of learner feedback on ETB programmes and services – including a paper trail to show learner feedback structures and how the feedback loops are closed, including examples where learners are kept advised of actions taken as a direct result of their comments. |
| Monitoring and Self-evaluation | Examples of internal monitoring – including monitoring of centres and 'second providers'. Evidence of the use of quantitative and qualitative sources of information in internal monitoring may be included. Examples of consideration of the outcomes of internal monitoring by governance structures and dissemination/publication of the outcomes to internal and external audiences would also be helpful. |

It is important that the ETB is mindful of the balance between providing sufficient material to demonstrate its quality assurance processes in action and compiling a report that is accessible for the review team. These should be limited to what the ETB considers strictly necessary in order to support the statements and conclusions in the self-evaluation report. Where possible, it is preferable for appendices to include hyperlinks to documents published on the ETB's website rather than reproducing the lengthy documents in an appendix.

# ANNEX D
# SAMPLE PLANNING VISIT SCHEDULE

The planning visit should normally be scheduled between 9:30am and 14:00pm and should include a brief tour of the rooms to be used by the review team during the main review visit. A sample schedule is outlined below. Depending on the composition of the ETB management structure, it may be necessary for some individuals to meet with the review team representatives in more than one meeting.

| TIME | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|------|--------------|-------|---------|
| 9:30am | Review Chair | | **Introductory Meeting with FET Director and ETB Review Co-ordinator** |
| | Co-ordinating Reviewer | | To discuss the key outcomes required by the end of the day. |
| | QQI Representative | | **ETB:** Make introductions and a few opening statements about the ETB's approach to review. |
| | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | **Reviewers:** May provide some initial comments/feedback from the team on the self-evaluation report and main review visit schedule and confirm what needs to be discussed. |
| | FET Director/s | | |
| 10.15am | Review Chair | | Meeting with Self-Evaluation Steering Group and discussion of self-evaluation report |
| | Co-ordinating Reviewer | | **ETB:** May outline the approach taken in the development of the self-evaluation report. |
| | QQI Representative | | **Reviewers:** The chair may outline the review team's initial reactions to the self-evaluation report and identify any areas of confusion or areas requiring further information/evidence. The linkage between the self-evaluation report and the main review visit schedule will also be explored to ensure that the two are complementary and will enable the review team to have sufficient oral and written evidence to compile the report. |
| | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | |
| | Self-Evaluation Steering Group | | |
| 11.15am | Coffee Break | | |
| 11.30am | Review Chair | | **Meeting with senior management representatives, including the ETB Chief Executive** |
| | Co-ordinating Reviewer | | **ETB:** May comment on organisational and strategic developments which may impact on quality processes and/or the main review visit. A macro-level overview of the direction of travel in relation to quality assurance and enhancement may also be helpful, alongside any commercially sensitive issues the ETB wishes to make known to the review team. |
| | QQI Representative | | |
| | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | |
| | Senior Management Representatives | | **Reviewers:** May provide an overview of macro-level feedback and views from the team based on the documentation considered in advance of the visit. The representatives of the senior management team will also be asked if there are any specific issues or areas the ETB would like the review team to consider. |

| TIME | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12.30pm | Review Chair | | Tour of Meeting Rooms |
| | Co-ordinating Reviewer | | |
| | QQI Representative | | |
| | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | |
| 13.00pm | Review Chair | | **Discussion of Main Review Visit Schedule (& Working Lunch)** The ETB and review team, assisted by QQI, finalise arrangements for the main review visit and ensure that both the ETB and the review team members are content that they have addressed all necessary aspects and are happy with the follow-up actions to be undertaken. This will include any additional documentation to be provided and any amendments to the main review visit schedule. |
| | Co-ordinating Reviewer | | |
| | QQI Representative | | |
| | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | |
| | FET Director/s | | |
| 14.00pm | Departure | | |

# ANNEX E
# SAMPLE MAIN REVIEW VISIT SCHEDULE

A sample schedule for the main review visit is outlined below. The main review visit meetings should take place primarily at one location to minimise disruption to the review team and the schedule. Meetings should normally be held between 09:30am and 17:00pm and the schedule should include:

» no more than 5-6 meetings between the review team and ETB stakeholders per day;

» time for private meetings of the review team to prepare for forthcoming meetings, reflect on the outcome of meetings and to examine documentation (electronic and hard copy); and

» comfort breaks for the review team.

## Day 1: Monday

| TIME | SESSION | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|------|---------|--------------|-------|---------|
| 8:30-9:30 | Reception | SMT and ETB Chief Executive | | Breakfast Reception. This will not include any discussion of the business of the review. |
| 9:30-10:00 | 1 | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | Commencement meeting |
| | | FET Director/s | | |
| 10:00-10:30 | Private review team meeting | | | |
| 10:30-11:30 | 2 | ETB senior management team | | Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement |
| 11:30-12:00 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 12:00-1:00 | 3 | Quality Council | | Discussion of the approach to, and mechanisms for, quality assurance and enhancement |
| 1:00-2:00 | Lunch / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 2:00-2:45 | 4 | World Café with learner representatives (Level 5/6 Programmes) | | Discussion of learner experience |

| TIME | SESSION | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2:45- 3:30 | 5 | World Café with learner representatives (Level 1-4 Programmes) | | Discussion of learner experience |
| 3:30-4:00 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 4:00-5:00 | 6 | Self-evaluation Steering Group | | Discussion of the experience of implementing quality assurance and mechanisms for strategic monitoring and evaluation |
| 5:00-5:30 | Private review team meeting | | | |

## Day 2: Tuesday

| TIME | SESSION | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00-9:30 | Review | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | Meeting to clarify issues from the previous day and review the plan for the day ahead |
| 9:30-11:00 | 1 | Heads of Centres (All services represented) | | Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation |
| 11:00-11:30 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 11:30-12:15 | 2 | Learner representatives (Apprenticeship and other WBL programmes) | | Discussion of learner experience |
| 12:15-1:00 | 3 | ETB Programme Approval Committee | | Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of programme development and approval |
| 1:00-2:00 | Lunch / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 2:00-2:45 | 4 | ETB Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee | | Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment |
| 2:45- 3:30 | 5 | ETB Policy & Procedures Group | | Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, the development of policy and procedures |
| 3:30-4:00 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 4:00-5:00 | 6 | Academic staff (cross-section of services and programmes) | | Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement |
| 5:00-5:30 | Private review team meeting | | | |

Day 3: Wednesday

| TIME | SESSION | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|------|---------|--------------|-------|---------|
| 9:00-9:30 | Review | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | Meeting to clarify issues from the previous day and review the plan for the day ahead |
| 9:30-11:00 | 1 | Learner Support Services Staff | | Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement of support services to learners |
| 11:00-11:30 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 11:30-12:15 | 2 | ETB Employer Engagement Function | | Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in quality assuring provision |
| 12:15-1:00 | 3 | External Stakeholders (Employer and Regional Skills Bodies Representatives) | | Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning and quality assurance and enhancement activities |
| 1:00-2:00 | Lunch / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 2:00-2:45 | 4 | Learner representatives (Learner Council/Forum) | | Discussion of mechanisms for learner voice |
| 2:45- 3:30 | 5 | Learner representatives (cross-section, including learners in second providers) | | Discussion of quality assessment and enhancement procedures |
| 3:30-4:00 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 4:00-5:00 | 6 | QA Unit | | Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality |
| 5:00-5:30 | Private review team meeting | | | |

## Day 4: Thursday

| TIME | SESSION | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00-9:30 | Review | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | Meeting to clarify issues from the previous day and review the plan for the day ahead |
| 9:30-11:00 | 1 | Second Providers | | Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers |
| 11:00-11:30 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 11:30-12:15 | 2 | Guidance Counsellors/Admissions Staff/Programme Managers | | Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression |
| 12:15-1:00 | 3 | Human Resources Staff | | Discussion of the role of HR in supporting quality assurance and enhancement |
| 1:00-2:00 | Lunch / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 2:00-2:45 | 4 | Finance Staff | | Discussion of the relationship between the ETB's quality assurance system and its Finance function |
| 2:45- 3:30 | 5 | Facilities & ICT staff | | Discussion of the role of facilities management and ICT in supporting quality assurance, enhancement and the learning experience |
| 3:30-4:00 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 4:00-5:00 | 6 | External Stakeholders (Community Providers & Groups) | | Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups |
| 5:00-5:30 | Private review team meeting | | | |

Day 5: Friday

| TIME | SESSION | PARTICIPANTS | NAMES | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00-9:30 | Review | ETB Review Co-ordinator | | Meeting to clarify issues from the previous day and review the plan for the day ahead |
| 9:30-10:15 | 1 | External Stakeholder (Higher Education Representatives) | | Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs |
| 10:15-11:00 | 2 | External Stakeholder (Awarding Bodies) | | Discussion of quality assurance arrangements of programmes leading to awards of different awarding bodies |
| 11:00-11:30 | Coffee Break / Private review team meeting | | | |
| 11:30-12:15 | 3 | Optional SMT | | If required, additional sessions to clarify any outstanding information. If not required, review team will discuss initial findings and begin to draft report. |
| 12:15-1:00 | 4 | Optional | | If required, additional sessions to clarify any outstanding information. If not required, review team will discuss initial findings and begin to draft report. |
| 1:00-3:30 | Lunch / Private review team meeting | | | Review team discuss initial findings and prepare oral feedback |
| 3:30-4:00 | 5 | ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners | | Oral feedback on initial review findings |
| 4:00 | Departure | | | |

**TRANSPORT AND ACCOMMODATION**

QQI will make travel arrangements for the review team members' journeys to and from[34]:

» the initial meeting of the review team;

» the planning meeting; and

» the main review visit.

The ETB is responsible for booking and managing local hotel accommodation and transport for the review team for the duration of the main review visit. In most cases, team members will arrive at the hotel a day or two in advance of the review visit. Provisional bookings for all members of the team should be made in a business-class hotel close to the meeting location, that can be guaranteed to provide a high-quality service at a competitive rate. The team will need accommodation for 5 to 6 nights for the duration of the main review visit. The option for members of the team to extend their stay linked to travel arrangements should also be referenced when the initial booking is made. All costs relating to the review will be covered by the charge for the inaugural review paid by the ETB to QQI. However, for practical reasons, ETBs are required to book and pay for local costs and subsequently invoice QQI for reimbursement.

**MEETING ROOMS**

For the planning visit, the ETB is asked to provide a meeting room – ideally the room that the review team will work from during the main review visit. All meetings during the planning visit should be conducted in this room to maximise the amount of time available and minimise disruption.

For the main review visit, the ETB is asked to make available (at no cost to QQI) two meeting rooms (ideally within close proximity) at the main review visit location for the duration of the visit[35]:

» The first room should accommodate up to 15 people. This should be used as the main meeting room throughout the visit;

» The second room (accommodating 8-10 people) may be required occasionally throughout the main review visit to accommodate any parallel meetings where the team might split. This room could also be used for the brief meetings between the co-ordinating reviewer, chairperson and ETB review co-ordinator at the start of each day.

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34  QQI may request assistance from the ETB in respect of making local taxi arrangements.

35  Further accommodation may be required if the ETB intends to include a world café-style session.

The rooms should have easy access to power points and WiFi to enable review team members to charge electronic devices and access the internet. Any log-in details required to access WiFi should be provided on arrival. It is also preferable that the review team has access to a projector and printer/photocopier (ideally located in the first room) from which members of the review team can print documents from their personal devices. It is advisable that IT support is available on arrival to support any set-up. A small supply of stationery for the review team would also be appreciated.

The ETB should also arrange for a private meeting room for the review team at the hotel for the afternoon and evening before the start of the main review visit to enable the team to initiate preparations. A private meeting room or private dining room should also be secured for the dinner on the penultimate evening to enable the review team to prepare for the final day's oral presentation.

## CATERING

For the planning visit, the ETB is asked to provide sandwiches or an informal lunch. This might be part of a working lunch meeting and should not be a lengthy or formal affair.

On the first day of the main review visit, the ETB is asked to host a breakfast reception between the review team and members of the ETB's senior management team, including the ETB Chief Executive. This is an informal opportunity for the ETB leadership to meet the review team before the main review visit schedule gets underway. There should usually be no more than six ETB attendees at this event and QQI representatives will also be in attendance.

During each day of the main review visit, the ETB is asked to provide relatively informal light lunches for the review team, with a range of healthy options where possible. Some variation in the menu across the week would be appreciated. Any specific dietary requirements will be communicated by QQI to the ETB review co-ordinator. Unless agreed in advance with the chairperson, lunches will be private working lunches in the team's base room. It would also be appreciated if tea, coffee and water could be made available to the team and replenished regularly throughout each day.

The ETB is asked to make provisional dinner reservations for the review team each night (including the night before the main review visit is due to begin) either in the main hotel restaurant (if secured as part of the room rate deal) or at nearby restaurants. Some variation in venues would be appreciated. If external restaurants are to be used, a taxi service should also be secured if the restaurants are not within walking distance.

The evening before the final day of the main review visit, the dinner reservation should be in a private setting to enable the final dinner to be a working dinner.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Contact details for the ETB review co-ordinator should be provided to QQI on commencement of the process. QQI will provide these details, and contact details for QQI representatives, to the members of the review team. The ETB review co-ordinator should be contactable at all times throughout the visits, by telephone or in person, by the review team chairperson, co-ordinating reviewer and QQI.

# Notes

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