

QQI and ETBs: Evolving Quality Assurance following Inaugural Review: Quality Dialogue Meetings and Annual Quality Reporting (AQR)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 IRELAND

Timeline

2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 45122

Background

In accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act of 2012, a provider's external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review of quality assurance by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). One of QQI's most important responsibilities is to ensure that an education provider's quality assurance procedures are effective. The main way of achieving this is through the external review process. An external review had not been undertaken for the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) previously.

QQI is the state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE) systems.

ETBs are statutory FET providers; they deliver a range of education and training programmes to learners from the ages of 16 and upwards, including VET and adult education throughout the country. Qualifications that ETBs offer are matched against the National Qualifications Framework. There are 16 ETBs in Ireland.

The underlying principle of embedding a culture of quality assurance in the Irish FET sector is to ensure all learners achieve qualifications that are credible and trustworthy.

Objectives

The core objective of the external review is to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of an ETB's internal quality assurance procedures.

The purpose of the inaugural review of ETBs quality assurance was to:

- (a) encourage a quality culture and improvement of the learning environment and experience in the ETBs by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice;
- (b) provide feedback to ETBs about the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance, organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality;

- (c) improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness;
- (d) support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs;
- (e) 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 (FET).

Description

The external review is conducted by review teams. National and international external reviewers are selected for their expertise in one or more specific areas, providing perspectives from education and training, quality assurance, learner voice, community and industry. SOLAS and the Adult Learning Association (AONTAS) provide support to the review teams.

The external review examines the following aspects:

Governance and management of quality

The review evaluates 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, e.g. further education colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers, collaborative partnerships/arrangements.

Teaching, learning and assessment

The review evaluates the arrangements to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB and a high-quality learning experience for all learners.

Self-evaluation, monitoring and review

The review evaluates 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 also reflects on how these processes are used to complete the quality cycle through the identification and promotion of effective practice and by addressing areas for improvement.

ETBs prepare self-evaluation reports. The review teams also conduct desk research and visit the ETBs where they gather evidence from staff, learners and stakeholders as regards the aspects above. Review reports are then drafted, discussed and published.

As part of the approach, the qualifications that ETBs offer are matched against the National Qualifications Framework.

2022 Implementation

The review took place in 2022 in all 16 ETBs. Individual inaugural review reports were published for each ETB by end of the year.

2023 Implementation

In March 2023, QQI as the statutory authority responsible for the external quality assurance of higher education (HE) and further education and training (FET) in Ireland published a sectoral report in quality assurance in the sixteen (16) Education and Training Boards (ETBs), following the inaugural reviews of ETBs in 2022. The report recommends to further strengthen the effectiveness of quality assurance in further education and training in the ETB sector; more specifically, the sectoral report team made the following four main recommendations:

1. ETB autonomy in relation to planning, implementing, monitoring and reviewing their approaches to quality assurance needs to be encouraged and strengthened;

2. the quality assurance of the effectiveness of individuals' teaching is underdeveloped and more needs to be done to improve its monitoring and evaluation;

3. the processes which are used to review and update programmes need to be strengthened;

4. ETBs and the ETB sector need to make better use of quantitative data to support quality assurance.

The report also indicated in proposals for the organisation of the next external review of FET provision in ETBs, which should take place within five years for each ETB. In addition, QQI should expect each ETB to use KPIs to complete an annual internal report on the effectiveness of the quality assurance of their FET provision.

2024 Implementation

In November 2024, QQI published a "*Synthesis report presenting an overview of the Follow-Up Reports submitted by the 16 ETBs*".

This report provides an overview of QA developments, enhancements and activities in the sector as reported in the 16 follow-up reports submitted by the ETBs in response to their respective inaugural review reports. It reflects key themes and notable activities arising from the follow-up reports in response to review recommendations, particularly noting:

- ETBs' engagement with the inaugural review and the follow-up reporting process that there is a strong commitment to the ongoing development of quality across the sector and many planned activities and actions have been implemented.
- The strengthening and organisation of the ETBs' relationships with regional industry partners and employers.
- Improvements made to how feedback is collected from learners and used to inform decision making and amplify the learner voice.
- Consistency of approach in relation to Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) is contributing to an improved learner experience.
- Innovative approach in the management and reporting of data, with a view to identifying and measuring improvement through the FET sector's national management information system (known as the Programme and Learner Support System - PLSS).
- Advances in continuous professional development (CPD) and professional learning and development (PLD).
- Quality assurance, its management, enhancement and oversight, continues to evolve and develop within ETBs. The inaugural review process marked a significant milestone for quality in the sector.

In February 2025, each ETB will submit an interim quality report on the progress made and impact of actions arising from the review report recommendations. QQI will continue to work with the sector towards the establishment of a systematic quality reporting process.

2025 Implementation

The implementation of the overall review of quality assurance in ETBs continued, following post-inaugural review quality dialogue meetings (QDMs), and moves into the systematic annual quality reporting (AQR). The development of AQR is expected to include collaboration and consultation, with the AQRs expected to commence in 2026. In the interim in 2025, ETBs submitted Interim Quality Report which includes links to its published quality assurance policies and procedures, following the earlier Action Plan and follow-up reports of the inaugural reviews.

Bodies responsible

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)
- Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB)
- Kilkenny Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB)
- Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB)
- Mayo Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB)
- Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)
- Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB)
- Limerick Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB)
- Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB)
- Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB)
- Cork Education and Training Board (CETB)
- Kerry Education and Training Board (KETB)
- Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB)
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb)
- Donegal Education and Training Board (DETb)
- Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB)
- Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB)
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
 Young people (15-29 years old)
 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
 Learners with migrant background, including refugees
 Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
 Learners with disabilities
 Adult learners
 Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
 Unemployed and jobseekers
 Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
 Low-skilled/qualified persons
 Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers
 Trainers
 School leaders
 Adult educators
 Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Subsystem

Further reading

[QQI - Quality Assurance of Education and Training](#)

[Database of all Publications for QA Inaugural Reviews, Action Plans, Follow Up Reports and Interim Reports](#)

[Quality Assurance of Further Education and Training in the ETB Sector- Sectoral Report March 2023](#)

[Quality in Further Education & Training: A Synthesis of the Education & Training Board Follow-Up Reports to the Inaugural QA Review Process. 2024 Report](#)

[The FET Professional Learning & Development: Statement of Strategy 2020-2024](#)

[The Further Education and Training \(FET\) Sector's National Management Information System \(MIS\): Programme Learner Support System \(PLSS\)](#)

[QQI Completes 2025 Quality Dialogue Meetings with ETBs](#)

[QQI & ETBs: an evolving QA relationship](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Learner Support Framework in Further Education And Training (FET) and National Charter for Universal Design

The position paper of this policy is underpinned by a Universal Design (UD) approach and aligns with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

The Framework to implement the policy outlines the enhancement of the overall learner experience within FET by:

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Further Education and Training (VET) Funding Model Review

The process of review started in 2019 with the agreement on the guiding principles and approach. An international expert panel was appointed, with an internal funding model review advisory group and data modelling working group established to support the panel's work.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Tertiary Degrees in Further Education and Training, guaranteeing progression to Higher Education.

Creating a unified tertiary system is one of the strategic priorities of the National FET strategy 2020-24.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Further Education and Training Colleges of the Future (CotF): Capital Call

The National FET Strategy defined that CotFs should have the following characteristics:

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2023 Completed

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Strategy 2021-23

DFHERIS funds and creates policy for the higher and further education and research sectors. It also oversees the work of the State agencies and public institutions operating in these areas.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 **Approved/Agreed**

Transforming Learning 2020-24: Ireland's National Further Education and Training Strategy

The FET strategy 2020–24 was developed in consultation with the FET sector and other key stakeholders. Consultation was wide-ranging and included bilateral meetings, regional workshops and a public call for submissions.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/45122>