

QA Manual

VSCCS QA Network

Glenamaddy Community School
GLENAMADDY, GALWAY, F45KF50

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Context

The Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) QA Network, a network of five voluntary secondary and community/comprehensive schools which had QA agreements in place with QQI as legacy providers, was established to provide a QA framework for the schools to re-engage with QQI. The Chair of the Boards of Management of each school signed to confirm, on behalf the Board, that the school would adopt a collective approach to QA when the QA system was approved by QQI through the re-engagement process.

Responsibilities

Individual Providers – the Schools

The schools, each operating under the direction and governance of their Board of Management, are the owners of the QA system.

- Each school operates under the common QA system agreed with QQI within the agreed scope of provision.
- Each maintains its own relationship as a recognised provider with QQI.
- Each reports on the implementation of the common QA system to the Quality Oversight Board.

Quality Oversight Board

The Quality Oversight Board which has an independent chair, is the custodian of the QA system and is responsible for:

- making informed recommendations to the Boards of Management with regard to academic standards and the quality of programmes;
- contributing to the overall continuous quality improvement and the culture of quality within the schools;
- supporting a consistency of approach and outcomes across the Network of schools;
- providing guidance to the schools.

Further Education Support Unit (FESU)

FESU, under the direction of the Director of the Unit, is responsible for:

- supporting the QOB – board papers and documentation, reporting, etc.
- maintaining the QA system and the QA documents, processes, guidelines, handbooks, and templates that make up the QA system.
- supporting the schools in interpreting and implementing the QA system.
- providing training and guidance in relation to the QA system.
- Facilitating communication and the sharing of learning and experience between the schools.

For the purpose of this document the following definitions/abbreviations apply:

Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) QA Network	QA Network
ACCS/JMB Further Education Support Unit	FESU
Teacher	Full- or part-time member of staff of the school accountable to the Principal of the school.
Tutor	Contracted on a part-time basis to deliver a programme or part of a programme. They report to the Quality Officer.

The role titles used throughout this document will vary from school to school. Each school must make clear in its organisation chart who undertakes these roles in their context.

VSCCS QA Network Shared Responsibilities

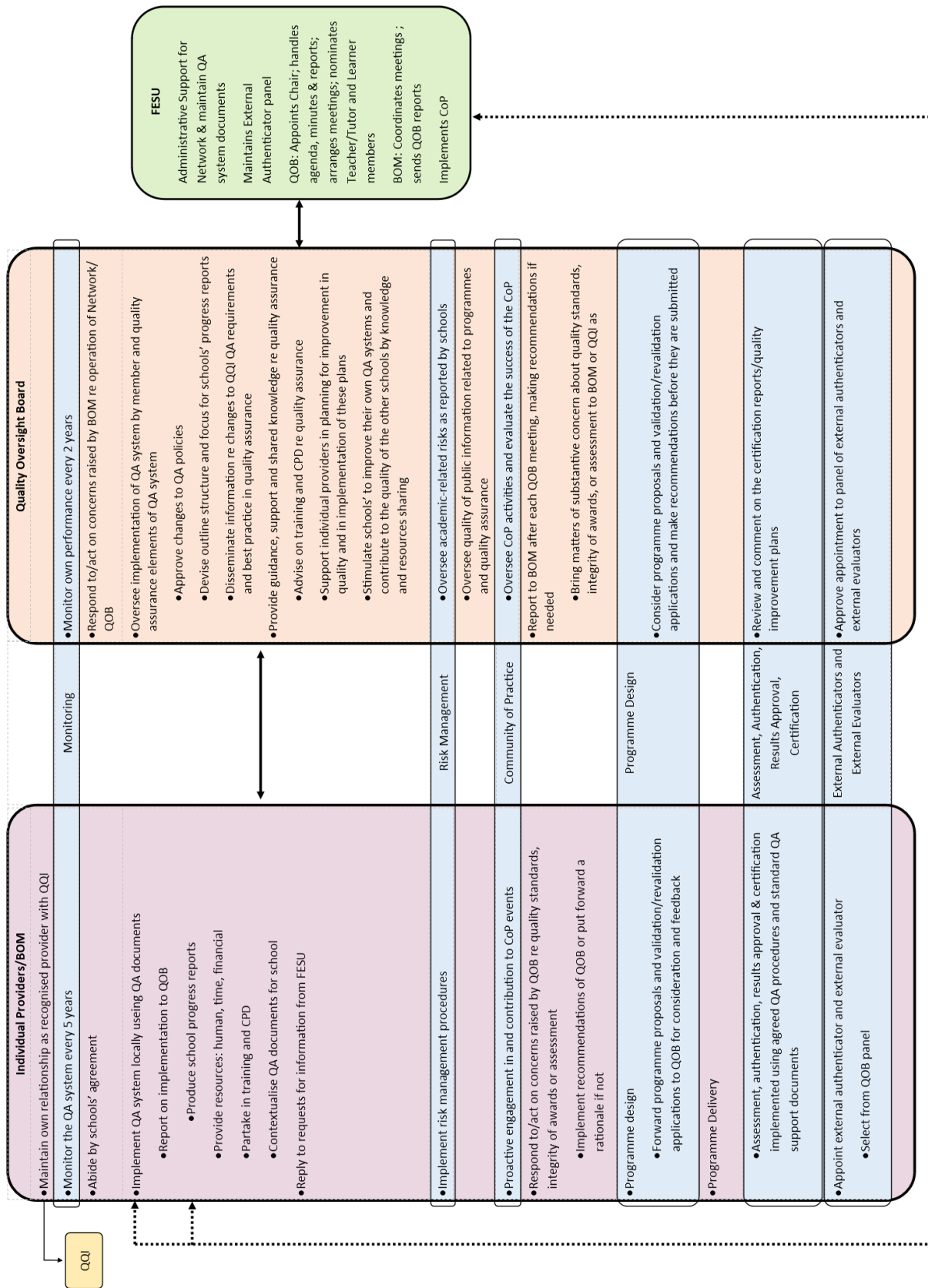


Figure 1 VSCCS QA Shared Responsibilities

Chapter 1 Governance and Management of Quality

Aligned to Core Guideline 1 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Governance Policy

Each **Board of Management** is responsible for the governance and direction of their school, the use of school resources and the management of budgetary allocations made to the school by the Minister and is ultimately responsible for programmes of education and training. To discharge its duty in this regard, the Board ensures that there is an adequate system of control, delegation and accountability to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of school services and school administration. The Board also considers the rationale for providing QQI validated programmes, with the financial, time and human costs associated with this provision.

The **Principal** is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school and reports to the Board.

The Boards of Management of the individual schools have agreed to establish a **Quality Oversight Board** (see [Appendix 1 Terms of Reference](#)) which has an independent chair to maintain oversight of the quality of FET programme provision and learner supports in the schools which operate within the VSCCS QA Network. Having an independent chair enhances objectivity and externality of key QA related decision-making processes and helps to ensure that decisions on academic matters and quality standards are made without undue influence of the Boards of Management.

The independent chair of the Quality Oversight Board must have academic governance experience and is selected on the basis of their expertise and knowledge of the context the schools operate in, and of being qualified to provide independent oversight. The schools also benefit from their insights into practices in other organisations.

The **Results Approval Panel** of each school maintains oversight of assessment processes and standards and approves results and reports to the Board of Management.

School Policies

Each Board of Management has overall responsibility for school policies and maintains oversight of the development, implementation and review of these policies as appropriate. The Board must ensure that the appropriate and necessary school policies are in place as required.

The policies include:

- Admissions
- Safeguarding

- Anti-Bullying
- Complaints
- Health and Safety Statement
- Data Projection

Ref: ***Governance Manual for Community & Comprehensive School/ JMB/AMCSS Manual for Boards of Management of Voluntary Secondary Schools.***

Management of Risk

Each Board of Management has overall responsibility for ensuring that risk is appropriately managed within the school and has delegated responsibility for managing risk in the school to the Principal. This involves the identification, categorisation, rating, and monitoring and reporting on of risks and maintenance of the school's **Risk Register**. The Quality Committee in each school maintains oversight of programme/academic/learner related risk and reports on such risks to the QOB. Programme-related risk is identified at the programme design stage. Risk is a standing item on the agenda for all Board of Management and Quality Oversight Board meetings, and any new or changing risks are highlighted by the individual Quality Officers at meetings of the Quality Oversight Board.

Management of Finances

Each Board of Management has overall responsibility for overseeing finances, the use of school resources and the management of budgetary allocations made to the school by the Minister and all other financial matters. To discharge its duty in this regard, the Board must ensure that there is an adequate system of control, delegation and accountability in place. While the Board may delegate some responsibilities to the Principal in this respect, and to the Finance Subcommittee of the Board, it must remain aware of its responsibilities and of its accountability to the Minister. The Finance Subcommittee is assigned very specific duties, terms of reference and reporting guidelines.

Protection for Enrolled Learners

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (the 2012 Act) makes specific mention of Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) in Part 6 (Sections 64-67) and outlines the requirements for compliance by providers and by QQI. The Act specifies that PEL applies to programmes of three months' duration or more and where fees have been paid by, or on behalf of, the learner. There is a legal requirement for providers to put in place arrangements to ensure that if a programme of education and training to which PEL applies ceases prematurely, learners will be able to complete a similar programme with another provider, or have their moneys refunded. Recognised schools are exempt from putting PEL arrangements in place. Therefore, there is no requirement for PEL in respect of the current QQI programme provision and the schools are exempt from PEL obligations.

Equality and Diversity

Each Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that there is a working and teaching environment that accommodates and encompasses equality and diversity and respects each

individual. Each school is expected to work towards creating a supportive and inclusive place of learning and work that is free from any form of discrimination – direct or indirect, where the dignity of the individual is protected and respected and diversity is positively accommodated. Each school is committed to equality in access and participation in its programmes insofar as this is possible. They do not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form and this behaviour may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Management of Quality

Quality Policy Statement

As a provider of programmes of training and education leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), each school in the Network has prime responsibility for the quality of the programmes and the supports they have in place for learners. In order to ensure quality, each school plans, resources and commits to creating and maintaining a culture and ethos of quality throughout the school. They focus on continually improving their programmes and supports, with the primary focus being the welfare and success of the learners. In order to achieve this, the five schools operate within a framework of a quality assurance (QA) system that is agreed by members of the VSCCS QA Network and by QQI. In order to ensure that the QA system is effective, governance units, management and staff must commit to owning the system and be proactive in implementing it.

Responsibilities

- Each Board of Management is responsible for resourcing, supporting, maintaining and ensuring the implementation and embedding of the QA system in relation to FET provision.
- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of the effectiveness of the QA system and makes recommendations with regard to its implementation and resourcing to the Board of Management.
- The Quality Officer co-ordinates the implementation of the QA system on a day-to-day basis in their respective school, maintains the local copy of the QA manual and associated documentation.
- The Quality Committee in each school supports the Quality Officer in monitoring, reviewing and overseeing the implementation, enhancement and monitoring of the QA system.

Embedding Quality and the QA System

- There is clear commitment of time, effort and resources to ensure a quality culture in the school community.
- All stakeholders have a role. If it takes a village to rear a child, it takes the whole school community to ensure a culture of quality.
- The school ensures that the QA documents are easy to access and use, and that users are trained to implement the QA system.
- The school has an internal Quality Committee to support the work of the Quality Officer.
- The school uses external expertise when required.

- There is regular and meaningful reporting on quality to the Board of Management, the Quality Oversight Board and the Principal.
- The school actively involves relevant stakeholders in implementing, reviewing and enhancing the QA system.
- There are clear roles and responsibilities for individuals, and terms of reference for governance units, which are reviewed and updated regularly.

Aims of the QA System

The QA system is designed to:

- help each school to identify and promote best practice;
- contribute to enhancing the learner experience;
- help to standardise practice;
- help to identify and mitigate risk;
- identify gaps in quality;
- facilitate communications within the school and externally with stakeholders;
- support continuous improvement;
- help to ensure regulatory and legislative compliance.

Scope of the QA System

The QA system applies to all in the school community who are involved in the design and delivery of FET programmes and associated activities including members of the Board of Management, management, members of staff, teachers, and learners. It does not apply to the school's relationship with the State Examinations Commission awarding body with which the member schools have a relationship. It also applies to those who are responsible for governance and to those who have direct responsibility for assuring quality. It is designed as a comprehensive, integrated system which supports and assures quality provision and is underpinned by the following pieces of legislation:

- The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) 2019
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)/The Data Protection Act (2018)
- Safety, Health and the Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015
- Equal Status Acts 2000-2015
- Further Education and Training Act 2013

It is designed to meet the requirements set out in the following QQI guidelines:

- **Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines** published by QQI (April 2016)
- **QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers** Revised 2013

Learner Involvement in Quality Assurance

- Details of the areas of the QA system which impact on learners are included in the Learner Handbook and they are discussed with the learners at Induction e.g. how to make a complaint, how to appeal, how to access additional support.
- Each school asks learners to let them know what they think about the programmes and the supports as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities. Learners are encouraged to give feedback to their teacher/tutor and/or the Quality Officer and may also use the **Complaints Procedure**.
- The school encourages class groups to elect/select a Class Representative (Class Rep) to represent the views of the class group and raise issues of concern that impact on the learning experience. The teachers/tutors maintain regular contact with the class reps to address issues as they arise. The school ensures that class reps are familiar with the learner supports that are in place.
- The External Evaluator communicates directly with learners as part of self-evaluation.
- There is a learner representative on the Quality Oversight Board.

Maintaining the QA System

Every two years, the QOB examines the effectiveness of the QA Network and its own effectiveness in meeting its responsibilities, the quality of its relationship with each school/Board of Management, FESU and the success of the Community of Practice. This process is undertaken with an External Evaluator who brings objectivity and expertise to the process. FESU coordinates the process, and it is undertaken in line with the procedure set out in [Appendix 10 Evaluating the Operation of the QOB and the QA Network](#). FESU maintains the documents that make up the QA system under the stewardship of the Director of the Unit. These documents and how they are being used by members of the Network are examined as part of this process.

Each school formally reviews the implementation of the agreed QA system and the QA documents that they use to implement the system every five years using the services of an External Evaluator. This is to ensure that the QA system:

- reflects experience and changing context;
- is effective in ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of programmes and supports;
- is accessible and easy to use;
- remains 'fresh,' and obsolete documents are removed;
- continues to meet QQI guidelines.

This is done in line with the procedure set out in [Appendix 11 Reviewing the QA System](#).

Resolving conflicts or differences of opinion that may arise within the Network

From time to time, issues may arise within the QA Network that need to be resolved in order to ensure that the Network continues to operate effectively, fulfil its role and achieve its objectives. If

such issues arise, the Network aims to resolve them at the lowest level using collaborative solutions-based strategies.

Examples of issues that could potentially arise

- School not fully or proactively engaging in Network activities e.g. not submitting reports/not attending meetings.
- School not implementing the agreed QA system.
- Board of Management not implementing QOB recommendations/not putting forward a rationale if they do not.

Model of Resolution

The focus is on open two-way communications – speaking and active listening and meeting face-to-face if possible. The levels from lowest to highest are:

- School
- FESU
- QOB
- BOM
- QQI

Steps to Resolution

1. FESU identifies the source of the conflict and gathers as much information as possible about the issue.
2. FESU may discuss the issue with the Chair of the QOB if appropriate.
3. Depending on how serious the issue is, FESU briefs the Chair of the QOB on progress in resolving the issue. The Chair uses their professional judgment to decide if and when they need to become involved.
4. FESU meets the school's Quality Officer on an informal one-to-one basis and attempts to reach a resolution. Both parties seek to identify points of agreement and difference.
5. Both FESU and the school's Quality Officer will suggest solutions that suits everyone e.g. if non-attendance at QOB meetings is an issue, changing the time/day of the meeting might help. The aim is to come to an optimal solution that everyone can live with.
6. If the issue is outside the remit/scope of responsibility of the Quality Officer (e.g. the Board of Management not implementing to the QOB's recommendations) or if the issue involves the Quality Officer, FESU may request to meet the Principal/Board of Management.
7. FESU reminds the school that they signed an agreement to operate under the common QA system, participate fully and proactively in the Network and implement QOB recommendations. FESU also points out the consequences of non-compliance.
8. If an issue cannot be resolved at this point, the Chair of the QOB may request to meet the Principal/Board of Management to progress the situation/attempt to find a resolution.
9. If all efforts to resolve the issue have failed at this point, the QOB may ask the school to resign from the Network and inform QQI of its decision and the reasons for this decision.

10. It is then up to the school to link directly with QQI to agree the best way forward for them to operate outside the Network.
11. The school must return all Network-related documentation to FESU.
12. FESU documents the issue, the solution and the process of resolution.
13. All involved are invited to reflect on the process of resolving the issue so if a similar issue arises in the future, it should be easier to resolve.

Resolution of Conflict within the Network

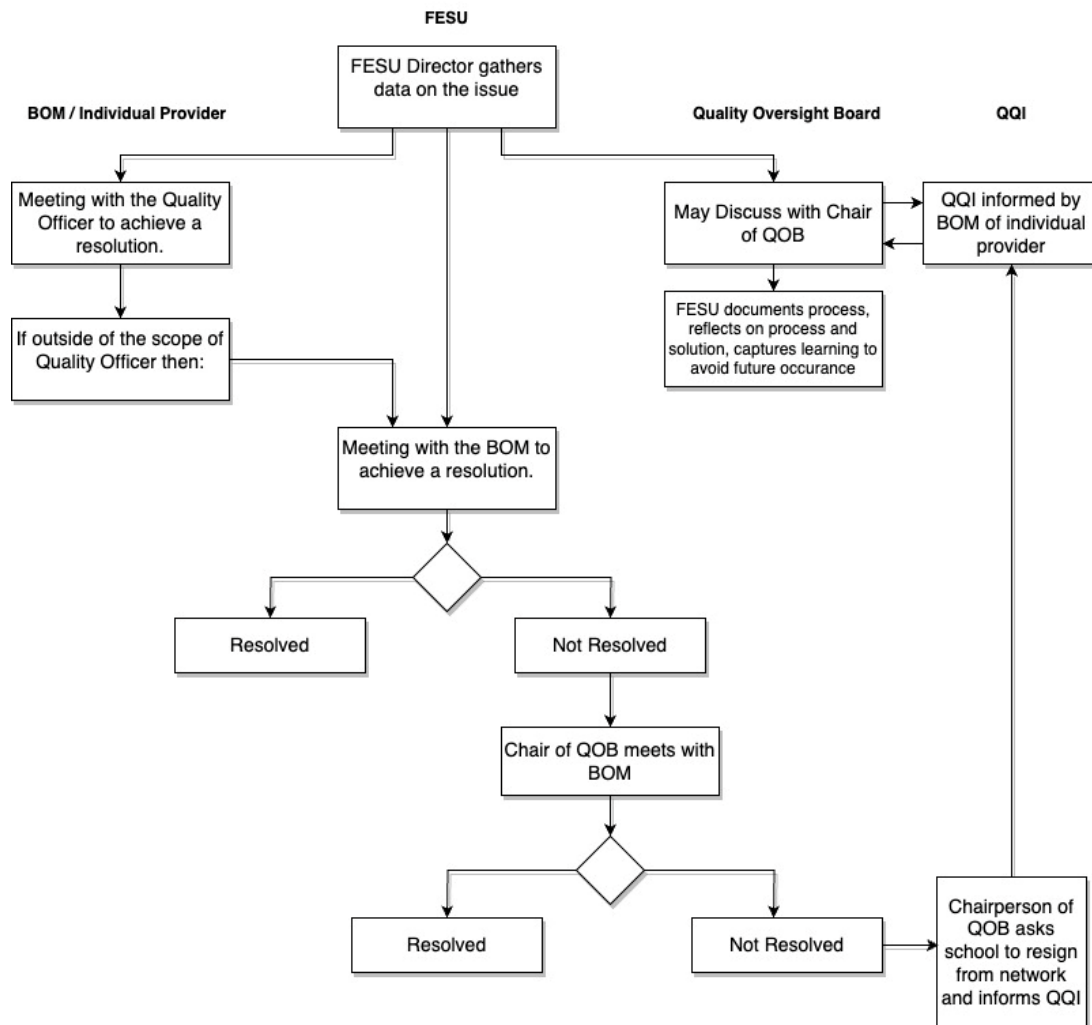


Figure 2 Resolution of Conflict within the Network

Chapter 2 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Aligned to Core Guideline 2 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy Statement

The QQI Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 9) requires that a provider's 'quality assurance system is fully documented; there are robust, documented policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of provision.' The Network's aim is to have a documented QA system that is fit for purpose and appropriate to the members' context, informed by and aligned to relevant QQI quality assurance guidelines. The QA documents used to implement the QA system should be consistent, accessible, easy to use, and all references and cross references correct and easy to follow. Each Network member school has arrangements in place for regular monitoring, evaluating and reviewing of policies and procedures.

Definitions

Policy

Ref: QQI Reengagement Application Guide February 2017

A *policy* is a statement or series of statements which set out a provider's position and commitment(s) on a particular area of education and training provision e.g. programme development. It should show that a provider is aware of its obligations in the area and is committing to deliver on these obligations. Policies are high-level documents setting out the 'why' something is done and the principles that inform the approach.

The policies in the QA manual:

- are written for all stakeholders, internal and external, to inform them about each school's position on a particular aspect of their role;
- set out broad parameters;
- are available to all stakeholders on the school's website;
- has the understanding and backing of the school's Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board;
- informs the learners of what they can expect from the school;
- informs staff of what is expected of them.

Procedure

A *procedure* describes a process intended to deliver all or part of a policy. Procedures set out the 'who,' 'what,' 'how,' and 'when,' and are written to make it clear how something is done (Would a new person in the role know what to do based on the procedures?).

The procedures in the QA manual:

- are written for the people who will be operating the process or engaging with it;
- address the practicalities of the process – 'how,' 'when' and 'by whom';
- are designed with the intention of delivering quality and consistency;
- are capable of being monitored to show if the procedure is effective (or not);
- evolve over time as improvements are identified and implemented;
- are 'retired' if they are obsolete or ineffective.

Responsibilities

- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of the QA system and the documents that make up the system.
- FESU maintains the documents that make up the QA system under the stewardship of the Director of the Unit.
- The Quality Officer manages the school's QA support documents on a day-to-day basis.

Elements of the QA System

- The QA Manual - the core QA document which sets out policies and procedures.
- Role Descriptions.
- Terms of Reference.
- Risk Register QA Network (school-based).
- Learner Handbook (school-based, designed in line with the template agreed by the Network).
- Teacher/Tutor Handbook (school-based, designed in line with the template agreed by the Network).
- QA Document Register - an Excel file to track QA documents.
- QA Reference documents that provide details for consultation, e.g. QQI QA Guidelines, Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012).
- QA Support documents used to implement procedures locally, e.g. internal verification form, learner evaluation form, complaints form (school-based).

Principles of QA Document Design and Use

- Use clear, simple and concise language that is easily understood.

- Write with the user/s in mind and test with the user.
- Documents are readily identifiable by name, version number and date.
- Do not use personnel names in QA documents – use role titles.
- Every policy and procedure has an identified owner.
- Remove obsolete documents from use and securely destroy or archive them.
- All documents are approved prior to issue.

QA Manual

The QA Manual is the core document in the QA system and is organised in single topic chapters based on the areas listed in Section 2 of *QQI's Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines April 2016*, the QA principles that underpin the QA policies and procedures. It is written in a style of writing that is intended to help the reader to understand the message the first time they read it. It is written with the users in mind and the aim is to present information clearly and concisely. Visuals are used where they are appropriate and help to clarify the meaning of the text. Each Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that the QA Manual is published on the school's website and the published version is up to date. The QA Manual can be accessed on the school's website, internally to teachers and staff and available to learners on the school's LMS (MS TEAMS), e.g. Complaints, Appeals, Late Submissions. Relevant sections are signposted in the Teacher/Tutor Handbook and Learner Handbooks.

Format And Presentation of QA Documents

Each school maintains the QA documents in electronic format for ease of access and use. This format makes it easier to revise and control the different versions and reduces the need for emails and paper. The school makes the QA documents they need available to teachers/tutors and learners through the use of shared electronic folders on the LMS. The school uses a system of hyperlinks across QA documents to ensure that if a QA procedure or document is update or revised, the change is consistent across all sources of information.

Naming Convention for Files And Folders

Descriptive file names are an important part of organising, sharing, and keeping track of files. The schools use the following file naming convention:

- Name files consistently
- File names are short but descriptive (<25 characters)
- Avoid special characters or spaces in a file name
- Use capitals and underscores instead of full stops or spaces or slashes
- Use ISO date format, DDMMYYYY
- Include a version number in the file name

Learner and Teacher/Tutor Handbooks

The school regards the Learner and Teacher/Tutor handbooks as key QA documents. Each school designs them, based on the templates agreed by the Network, and aligns them as closely as possible to these templates. The school reviews and updates them annually, getting the input of users. The tone of the handbooks is welcoming and direct, written in plain, reader-friendly language and signposted in a manner that makes it easy for readers to access the QA documents they need. The school keeps these handbooks as short and as concise as possible, referencing the detail of the policies and procedures through the use of hyperlinks to the more detailed documents, or signposting to the website and/or the LMS.

The school makes these handbooks available at or in advance of Induction and there is a copy of the Learner Handbook in the LMS.

Guidelines For Designing a Learner Handbook

- Be clear on the purpose of the handbook - to provide a single source of relevant and consistent information which is easily accessible to learners and others.
- Keep the audience in mind – you are writing for a cohort that won't want to read a long detailed document.
- It should be user-friendly in terms of its language and length - keep it as short and concise as possible.
- Decide how it will be distributed and when (e.g. available on the LMS before Induction).
- Provide links and signposts to policies and procedures, associated forms and documents and other important information as to where the learner can access documents on the LMS (this helps to keep it concise).
- Use the language you use on a day-to-day basis when communicating with learners.
- Use visuals where possible to engage the reader.
- Set out the different sections in a logical sequence following the sequence of the learner journey through programmes, including such things as appeals, progression, late submission, RPL, access, transfer and progression.

Guidelines For Designing a Teacher/Tutor Handbook

- Be clear on the purpose of the handbook - to provide a single source of relevant and consistent information which is easily accessible to teachers/tutors.
- Decide how and when the teacher/tutor can access it, e.g. make it available before Induction.
- Provide clear and unambiguous links and signposts to policies and procedures, associated forms and documents and other important information on the LMS.
- Align it closely with the information in the QA Manual, the Learner Handbook and the role and responsibilities of the teachers/tutors.
- Set out the different sections in a logical sequence following the sequence of the teacher/tutor journey through programmes.
- Get a teacher/tutor to read a draft/ask teachers/tutors what they want to see in the handbook/what information they need.

- Worth investing time at the design stage - a valuable resource if designed well with the user in mind.

Maintaining QA Documents

Both FESU and the five schools in the QA Network have responsibilities with regard to maintaining the QA documents that make up the QA system. FESU maintains generic documents that make up the QA system. Each school is responsible for contextualising these documents and ensuring they are fit-for-purpose for use in the school.

QA procedures are intended to be dynamic and to evolve and adapt as provision changes. While policies, by definition, are more or less fixed and change infrequently, procedures and QA support documents need regular review, amending and updating to reflect changing contexts. The school formally reviews the QA system every five years and benchmarks it against prevailing QA requirements. The school uses a **QA Document Register** - an Excel file to track and record all QA documents.

Chapter 3 Programmes of Education and Training

Aligned to Core Guideline 3 of QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy Statement

The rationale for providing QQI validated programmes and the associated financial, time and human resource costs are documented and are considered by the Board of Management before a decision is taken to proceed with programme development. The school identifies the needs of learners and other interested parties and develops programmes to meet these needs. The school ensures that programme structures, training methodologies, materials, delivery, and assessment methodologies are designed to meet the needs of potential learners and are consistent with the QQI award standard. Programmes are designed to reflect the standards of the NFQ – i.e. knowledge, know-how and skills and competencies, and learning outcomes associated with the different levels. The school has documented work placement procedures that include work placement guidelines that clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of the work experience teacher, the learners on placement and workplace supervisors. The school does not offer a programme leading to a QQI award before it is validated by QQI.

Definition

"A programme of education and training is a process by which a learner acquires knowledge, skill or competence and includes a course of study, a course of instruction and an apprenticeship."

[QQI Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training validation of programmes of education and training](#), 2017, p.5

Responsibilities

- The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring the resources for programme design and approval, delivery, quality, and resources are in place.
- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of the quality of programme design and approval, delivery, quality, and resources.
- The school's Quality Committee works with the Quality Officer in coordinating programme design and approval, delivery, quality, and resources.

Programme Design

The school constantly assesses the training and educational needs of learners and the school and local community it serves and encourages members of the Board of Management, the Quality

Committee, staff, teachers, past and present learners and employers to suggest new programmes for development.

Avenues To Programme Design

1. Develop a new programme *ab initio* using the Common Award System (CAS*)
2. Develop a new programme *and* a new award standard *ab initio* outside CAS**
3. Adapt a programme validated by the ETB accessed through the 'Shared Curricula'

* CAS Awards

The award outcomes have already been developed by QQI. A CAS programme may lead to a major, special purpose, supplemental or minor award(s).

**Programmes Leading to Non-CAS Awards

This involves proposing a new award, through the development of a programme that is consistent with the relevant NFQ award-type descriptor. The programme learning outcomes are the standard for the new, associated QQI award as no CAS award exists. A non-CAS programme may lead to a major, special purpose, supplemental or minor award(s). A non-CAS programme maps its learning outcomes to a relevant NFQ award type descriptor to provide evidence that the programme can lead to a new QQI award.

ETBI Programme Sharing Process

The school has access to programmes which were developed by ETBs for sharing with Department of Education providers. The school gains access to these shared programmes through a process managed by the ACCS/JMB Further Education Support Unit (FESU).

The procedure is as follows:

- The Quality Officer:
 - requests a copy of the component specification from FESU via FESS;
 - completes the **FET Programme Validation Application Form, Part 2, Programme Module Descriptor** and drafts sample assessment briefs, marking schemes and outline solutions;
 - submits the completed application form and supporting document to FESU for screening.
- FESU screens the application for completeness and general accuracy. This is not an evaluation.
 - FESU may ask for additional information/clarification at screening.
 - The Quality Officer responds to FESU with additional information/clarification if asked for it.
- Following successful screening, FESU forwards the application to QQI for approval.
- QQI confirms approval with FESU.

- FESU confirms programme approval in writing to the Quality Officer.

Procedure for Developing a New Programme

The Board of Management establishes a Programme Design Team which operates according to the terms of reference set out in [Appendix 7 Programme Design Team Terms of Reference](#). There is a detailed procedure that sets out the steps to follow in the design and development of a programme. The procedure is set out in [Appendix 8 Design, Development and Approval of Programme Procedure](#).

Programme Delivery

The Quality Officer is responsible for planning and organising delivery ensuring that the venue, equipment, teacher, learner information and other resources are in place. If the Quality Officer identifies a need for new or additional equipment or resources, they alert the Principal who sources what is needed and consults with the Board of Management if significant expenditure is required.

Programme Delivery Procedure

The Quality Officer:

- checks that there is a sufficient number of applicants for the programme to proceed and discusses this with the Principal if necessary;
- makes sure that the classroom is suitable for the programme, the learners and teachers/tutors and complies with health, safety and accessibility - the programme does not commence until the venue is approved;
- checks that there is a teacher/tutor who is suitably qualified available;
- checks programme materials and resources;
- checks the availability of a suitable room for an examination (if there is any exam);
- updates the Teacher/Tutor QA Folder;
- confirms that any arrangements for reasonable accommodation are in place.

The Quality Officer meets the teacher/tutor for a pre-programme briefing to discuss:

- The programme and assessment timetable
- Updates/changes to programme content
- Resources, equipment and facilities
- Learner Induction
- Assessment strategy and timetable
- Arrangements for examination/security (if there is any exam)
- The applications/learner profiles
- Arrangements for reasonable accommodation (if any)
- RPL applicants (if any)
- Health, safety and risk

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Dates and arrangements for authentication and certification
- Updates to the Teacher/Tutor QA folder

Programme Validation/Revalidation

Programme Validation

“Validation is a quality assurance process intended to ensure that a proposed programme can enable a learner to acquire and demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skill or competence to justify the award(s) being offered in respect of that programme.”

As part of the design process, the Programme Design Team ensures that the programme is consistent with the QQI award standard and is in line with QQI validation policy and guidelines. Information relating to making a validation application to QQI is available on the QQI website and the Programme Design Team uses the application templates provided by QQI to help present applications and programmes consistently and systematically. The team takes care to ensure that all the criteria are addressed, and all template sections completed. As part of monitoring and review processes, the school checks that they are meeting the conditions of validation of programmes set out in the Certificate of Validation issued by QQI. The school facilitates external reviews by QQI of a validated programme if requested to do so by QQI. Validation by QQI is for a maximum of five years and then automatically lapses unless renewed through revalidation. The school arranges for the revalidation of continuing programmes every five years (unless otherwise advised by QQI) in accordance with QQI policy. Validation is always determined conditionally and may be reviewed and withdrawn by QQI at any time under the 2012 Act if the conditions of validation are not being complied with.

Procedure for Submitting an Application for Validation

- The Programme Design Team produces a draft application for validation based on the programme descriptor and on the QQI guidelines for validation prevailing at the time.
- The Quality Officer benchmarks the final drafts for compliance with the QA system and QQI guidelines/requirements and asks a colleague to double-check, proof-read, and format the final version of all documents being submitted to QQI, and check for consistency of language and terminology.
- The Principal signs-off on the application before it is submitted.

The Quality Officer submits the application for validation to QQI via the QQI QHub using the **QHub Providers' User's Manual - Programme Validation** as reference and arranges for the fee to be paid.

Admissions

The school welcomes all applicants as long as they meet the minimum entry requirements/are eligible for entry by RPL and the school can accommodate them if they have specific needs. The school gives applicants comprehensive and up-to-date information about the programme, the entry criteria and the admissions process before they apply, and encourages anyone interested in applying for a place to talk through the details with them before they apply. The school makes it clear what level of commitment and time is involved and what is required of a learner who can expect to successfully complete the programme. Learners whose first language is not English are advised about the level of English required to successfully complete the programme. Details of the school's admission policy are set out clearly in the school's **Access, Transfer and Progression Policy**.

English Language Requirement for Entry

Competence in reading, writing, listening and speaking English is an entry requirement for all programmes. Details of the required level are set out as part of the **recommended minimum requirements** included in public information published about the programme, e.g. programme brochures. The levels listed represent the *minimum* standard needed in general, and in some field areas, higher levels may be required. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that the applicant is sufficiently competent before they take up a place.

The following are the two scenarios in which the school may request evidence of a learner's English language proficiency.

Applicants Whose First Language is Not English

Applicants whose first language is not English if they **have not** successfully completed a programme of education/training via English already, e.g. the Leaving Certificate. Recognition of Prior Learning may be applied to applicants who have successfully achieved a full award in a cognate discipline at an appropriate level on the National Framework of Qualifications, e.g. at NFQ Level 4 if applying for a programme at NFQ Level 5. These applicants may be required to demonstrate proficiency in English to an appropriate level as specified by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). They must have achieved an appropriate score in an approved examination in English language. The Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied qualification achieved through English meets the CEFR B2 English language requirement. There is a question on the application form asking if English is the applicant's first language. If the answer is no, the applicant is asked to confirm that they have the level of English specified in the entry requirements, e.g. CEFR level B2 competence in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking is the entry requirement for most Level 5 programmes. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide proof in the form of a valid certificate in English language from an approved institution.

Level of English Required at NFQ Levels 3 to 6

	Minimum English Level Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	International Examinations	Minimum Grade
Entry to programmes at Level 3 of the NFQ	Minimum B1 in all skills on entry (reading, writing, speaking and listening)	Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET)	Pass
Entry to programmes at Level 4 of the NFQ	Minimum B2.1 in all skills on entry	Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET)	Distinction
		Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE)	Grade C
		IELTS	5.5
Entry to programmes at Level 5 of the NFQ	Minimum B2.2 in all skills on entry	Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE)	Grade B or higher
		IELTS	6
Entry to programmes at Level 6 of the NFQ	Minimum B2.2 in all skills on entry	Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE)	Grade B or higher
		Cambridge Advanced (CAE)	Borderline Fail Min. 170 points
		Cambridge Proficiency (CPE)	Unsuccessful Min. 170 points

Applicants Whose First Language is English

The school may ask applicants whose first language is English to demonstrate proficiency if they have any doubt that the applicant's literacy level is not sufficient to allow them to successfully participate/does not meet the entry requirement. The school reviews the completed application form and if there are any doubts arising from the application process to date the school may ask the applicant to undertake an English language assessment of written material completed in the school. The school assesses the level and makes an appropriate decision about offering a place to the applicant.

If the applicant is assessed as not having the required level of English language proficiency, the school will:

- a) advise on appropriate English language supports, e.g. NALA or ETB Adult Literacy programme;
- b) advise on alternatives programmes that may require a lower level of English.

(This is a guideline for each of the schools and may vary in detail from school to school. Each provider in the Network has developed their own Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) policy which includes

details of the basis on which a determination is made to request evidence of a learner's English language proficiency.)

Transfer and Progression

The school facilitates transfer and progression inwards and outwards from their programmes in line with the validated arrangements and their ATP policy. Graduates of a programme have the option of transferring or progressing to other FE, or HE institutes who offer programmes leading to awards on the NFQ in related areas. The Programme Design Team works with the school's Careers Guidance counsellors to research and design progress routes and entry requirements and to detail appropriate transfer and progression options in the programme descriptor. This is agreed with QQI as part of the validation process. Information on transfer and progression pathways is included on programme brochures and on the school's website. Transfer and progression is explained in the Learner Handbook and at Induction. The school facilitates and supports learners who are applying for entry to other programmes by providing transcripts, academic references and any other relevant documentation in a timely manner.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can *"be used by the learner to gain entry to a programme; gain exemptions within a programme; gain credit towards an award: a learner may gain a credit towards an award using previous certification and/or attain an award: a learner may be awarded a Major or Minor Award on the basis of previously acquired learning for which they do not have a formal certificate"* (CEDEFOP, 2011, p7).

The school encourages learners who do not meet the stated entry requirements but have appropriate prior experiential learning to apply for admission using RPL. Requests for admission by RPL are considered on a case-by-case basis and the school guides and supports the applicant through the process. An RPL applicant must be able to demonstrate learning based on what they achieved through another programme of study, their work or other learning experiences.

Procedure

- Applicants complete and submit an **RPL Application Form** and supporting evidence that is consistent with the award standard. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, CVs, references, certificates or testimonials, products or samples, job descriptions and/or evaluations, evidence of attendance at training courses or workplace assessments.
- The Quality Officer assesses the application/supporting evidence in accordance with the award standard. This evaluation may include an interview with the applicant.
- The Quality Officer advises the applicant of the outcome. If the applicant is not offered a place, the Quality Officer explains the rationale behind the decision and advises the applicant that they can appeal the decision if they wish.
- The Quality Officer assigns a teacher who had no previous involvement in the assessment of the application as an Appeals Examiner to review the application, check if correct procedures were followed, and the decision.

- The Appeals Examiner decides to uphold the initial decision or not. This decision is final.
- The Quality Officer advises the teacher/tutor at the pre-programme briefing if there are any RPL learners and asks the teacher/tutor to monitor and report on their progress.

The school also facilitates learners in gaining exemptions if they have already achieved certification for modules of a major award. Applicants for exemptions must submit the original award certificate (not a copy) to the Quality Officer who retains a copy and returns the original immediately to the applicant by registered post or in person. The certificate must have been achieved in a timeframe in line with QQI guidelines.

Requesting Exemptions

The school facilitates learners in gaining exemptions if they have already achieved certification for modules of a major award. Claiming an exemption is a procedure carried out by the school when entering a learner for certification in a major award. An exemption can only be claimed for a learner who is applying for a major (full) award or if they hold an award made by another awarding body where the awarding body is nationally recognised in its own country and operating a quality assured awarding process, e.g. State Examinations Commission (Leaving/Junior Certificate), ECDL, MOS, etc. To apply for an exemption, the learner must complete and submit an **Exemption Request Form** to the Quality Officer. It is very important that a learner apply for an exemption as soon as they start a course in order to ensure that they are eligible for the exemption for which they are applying. Applications for exemptions must be received no later than three weeks from the commencement of a module. Applicants for exemptions must submit the original award certificate (not a copy) to the Quality Officer who retains a copy and returns the original immediately to the applicant by registered post or in person. The certificate must have been achieved in a timeframe in line with QQI guidelines. An exemption claim is submitted to QQI by the school on behalf of the learner.

Managing and Quality Assuring Work Placements

A school offering the work experience programme must quality assure the placement according to a documented procedure. This helps to ensure the quality of placements and to support the learners on placement and their supervisors. The Work Experience teacher has primary responsibility for ensuring the quality of the placements and that learners on work placement are well prepared, managed and supported, and for monitoring the quality of placements and workplace assessment.

Definitions/Acronyms

- WP - Work Placement
- WPS - Workplace Supervisor
- WE - work experience

Reference Documents

- FESS Work Experience Resource List
- Work-Based Learning - Compilation of Draft Booklets (CDET 2016)

Procedure for Quality Assuring Work Placements

Key Steps for Implementation

- The Work Experience teacher explains the process, including Garda vetting, to the learners at Induction and provides the learners with a **Work Placement Registration Form**.
- Each learner must submit a completed Work Placement Registration Form to the Work Experience teacher for review, approval and sign-off before a placement begins.
- The learner may need to be successfully Garda vetted before a placement begins (depending on the programme).
- The Work Experience teacher contacts the WPS before a placement begins to introduce themselves, talk through the details of the placement and the type of work the learner will be assigned and advises the WPS that they are the point of contact for any queries/issues.
- When a WP begins, the learner gives details of insurance and evidence of Garda Vetting to the WPS.
- The learner must comply with the workplace rules and regulations at all times during the WP.
- The Work Experience teacher contacts the WPS as least once during the WP to check everything is progressing satisfactorily.
- WPSs are required to assess learner performance under a number of stated criteria and rate performance linked to each criterion when completing the **Workplace Supervisor Report**.
- Learners are required to compile and maintain a learner record throughout the work placement using a template provided by the Work Experience teacher.
- If a learner is unable to attend the workplace, they must inform the WPS and the Work Experience teacher immediately. Absence is excused only in exceptional circumstances, e.g. illness, and the learner must submit supporting evidence, e.g. a medical certificate.
- When the WPS has assessed the performance of the learner, they complete the Workplace Supervisor Report, sign it and return it by email to the Work Experience teacher by the agreed date. The school uses the standard Workplace Supervisors Report template which is part of the QA support documents. This helps to ensure consistency. The report template is reviewed as part of the biennial review of QA documents.
- The Work Experience teacher retains all WP-related documentation securely and submits it with the assessment portfolio for internal verification.
- The Work Experience teacher and the learner review the placement and the learner record together and the teacher maintains a record of this review.

Chapter 4 Staff Recruitment, Management & Development

Aligned to Core Guideline 4 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy

Under Section 24 of the Education Act, 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act, 2012) the Board of Management is the employer of teachers and other staff of the school. The Board's role as an employer includes responsibility for the recruitment and dismissal of teachers and other staff within the school, subject to relevant Department circulars, employment legislation and sectoral agreements. Issues with teacher performance and conduct are addressed under agreements reached under section 24(3) of the Education Act, 1998. Procedures in relation to professional competence issues and general disciplinary matters are set out in circulars issued by the Department of Education.

Teachers must be registered with the Teaching Council in the appropriate subject/module area.

All teachers and staff are garda vetted and recruitment of staff is done in a fair and transparent way as per the Department of Education procedures.

Members of staff are encouraged to take up opportunities for professional development and funding is provided for this. The processes of recruitment, selection and appointment of part-time contracted tutors are designed to ensure the school contracts tutors of the highest calibre to fill vacancies. The school regards them as full members of its Programme Teams and values their input. The school ensures that these tutors are well supported and expects them to contribute to the development of programmes and makes it easy for them to do so. The school supports them in developing their professional competencies to enable continuous improvement of the learning environment and individual programmes. Staffing and staff development are recurring items on the agenda for Board of Management and Quality Oversight Board meetings.

Responsibility

- The Board of Management is responsible for school staffing.
- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of staffing needs in relation to the quality of FET provision and makes recommendations to the Board of Management.
- The Principal manages staff on a day-to-day basis.
- The Quality Officer is responsible for the recruitment and management of part-time tutors under the direction of the Principal.

Role Descriptions

There are documented role descriptions for the roles which relate to FE provision. The tutor role description is set out in the Teacher/Tutor handbook, discussed at Induction and reviewed regularly by the Quality Officer and updated as needed

Recruitment Of Part-time Tutors

When a vacancy for a part-time tutor arises:

- The Quality Officer draws up a role/job description detailing the role and responsibilities of the position, the requirements in terms of qualifications, skills and experience as set out in the programme-specific statement of required qualifications, and terms and conditions.
- The Quality Officer advertises the position.
- The Quality Officer and another member of the Quality Committee short-lists the candidates, and the Quality Officer invites the short-listed candidates to attend for interview.
- The Quality Officer and a member of the Quality Committee, forming an Interview Panel, interview applicants.
- Candidates are required to make a 10-minute prepared training presentation in their subject matter area as part of the interview process. The focus of the interview is on content delivery and pedagogical practices and the candidate's ability to create a supportive teaching and learning environment.
- The Quality Officer checks references.
- The Principal approves the appointment based on the recommendation of the Interview Panel.
- If the tutor will have access to learners aged 18 or under or vulnerable adults, they must be Garda vetted and undergo safeguarding training.
- Each tutor must submit evidence of qualifications and experience and must update their CVs and supporting documents before they sign a contract.
- The tutor and the Quality Officer both sign the tutor contract.

Induction And Training of Staff And Teachers

Teachers and fulltime members of school staff are inducted as per the Department of Education guidelines.

The Quality Officer inducts contracted tutors, and all new tutors must attend Induction. Induction is based on the Induction Checklist and includes a discussion on the information contained in the Teacher/Tutor Handbook and the Role Description and a Q & A with the Quality Officer.

Tutor Induction Checklist

- The school's aims, ethos and values, structure and organisation.

- Specific roles, responsibilities and requirements of the role.
- The QA system and the tutor's role and responsibilities in implementing it.
- Supports for tutors.
- Health and safety.
- Support for learners and reasonable accommodation.
- QQI and the NFQ.
- Data Protection.
- Assessment.
- Assessment malpractice.
- Marking and grading.
- Providing feedback to learners.
- Set up on internal systems.
- Email Account setup.
- Rates of pay and how payment is made/Invoice submission procedure.
- Cancellation procedure.
- Resources and equipment.
- Attendance/Participation in CPD.
- Teacher/Tutor Handbook.
- Programme briefing and debriefing and evaluation.

All staff and tutors managing, co-ordinating and delivering FET programmes leading to QQI awards are inducted into their role as implementers of the QA system. Induction, on-going training and team meetings ensure that staff and tutors understand their role in implementing the QA system and are updated in relation to any changes that impact on their responsibilities.

Supports for Teachers and Tutors

The Quality Officer organises Programme Team meetings each term to discuss programme development and encourage collaboration. Teaching and assessment skills are a standing item for these meetings. Updates and changes to programmes are discussed and agreed at these meetings and training/upskilling is provided if necessary. Any changes to the QA system which impacts on the work of teachers and tutors are also highlighted and discussed at these meetings.

The school encourages teachers and tutors to share learning and resources and when a contracted tutor is appointed, they are given access to a shared online folder which contains the following:

- A copy the QA manual
- QQI Quality Assurance Assessment Guidelines for Providers 2013. Updated 2018
- Teacher/Tutor Handbook
- Learner Handbook
- Programme specific documents – assessment briefs etc.

The school also encourages teachers/tutors to avail of training opportunities which will enhance their programme. If they identify some CPD event that they think will improve the programme and help the learners, they are encouraged to talk to the Quality Officer who may be able to support

their attendance. Staff and tutors are encouraged to be reflective and to assess their own performance and development needs. Training is provided either in-house by staff or externally where appropriate. The school provides training in health and safety, equality and diversity, and data protection.

The school expects teachers to engage in a Community of Practice, e.g. engaging with FESS and Further Educational Support Unit (FESU) and ACCS in-service, and to maintain membership of relevant professional bodies, attend relevant seminars and conferences and to engage in professional networking. The Quality Officer identifies suitable in-service opportunities for teachers/tutors through contact with other Colleges of Further Education, FESS, and SOLAS e-College.

Teacher/Tutor Handbook

The Teacher/Tutor Handbook is a key QA resource for teachers/tutors and forms an important part of Induction. It is updated annually by the Quality Officer with the input of users and re-issued with a new version number and date. The previous version is removed from the QA system and archived. There is a copy of the Teacher/Tutor Handbook in the shared online QA folder.

Staff Handbook

The school's Staff Handbook applies to all staff including full-time teachers and is given to staff at Induction. It covers employee rights and responsibilities, disciplinary and grievance procedures, procedures in relation to bullying, harassment and dignity at work, data protection, health, and safety.

Required Qualifications for Tutors

Tutors must submit copies of all relevant, current award certificates and evidence of their pedagogical and professional qualifications when they apply for a position and update them if there are changes. They must have appropriate technical and pedagogical qualifications and be capable of delivering the specified programme.

Qualifications and skills required are:

- Educational qualification at Level 8 on the NFQ (minimum).
- Ability to deliver programmes at a level appropriate to learners' educational background.
- Experience in assessment.
- Ability to draw from their own practical work experience to enhance their training delivery.
- Strong interpersonal communication skills.
- Ability to work on own initiative and as part of a Programme Team.

- Good planning and organisational skills.

There are programme-specific requirements for each programme to ensure that tutors have the qualifications and experience required to meet the needs of the learner profile and the subject matter specific to that programme.

Teachers'/Tutors' Role in Quality Assurance

Teachers/tutors are the single most important element in ensuring the quality of programmes and supporting learners. Their commitment to the ongoing enhancement and development of programmes and the QA system is critical.

- Teachers/tutors are informed of updates to the programme and the QA system at Programme Team meetings (held every term).
- Teachers/tutors must be familiar with the QA system and the handbooks which are talked through at Induction.
- Teachers are represented on the Quality Oversight Board, the Results Approval Panel and the Quality Committee.
- Teachers and tutors are involved in the design and updating of the Teacher/Tutor Handbook and in reviews of the QA system.
- The school is committed to having structured and clear mechanisms in place to facilitate teacher/tutor feedback and suggestions for programme improvement through:
 - Regular staff and Programme Team meetings.
 - Ongoing communication and one-to-one meetings with the Principal and the Quality Officer.
 - Input into programme review and evaluations.
 - Completion of feedback forms.

Contingency Plan for Tutor Absence

- The school follows the standard procedure if a teacher is absent.
- The school expects part-time tutors to give as much advance notice as possible if they are unable to attend a class for any reason. They must contact the Quality Officer by email and phone. If the Quality Officer is not available, they must contact the school office.
- If possible, the Quality Officer arranges for a suitable replacement from the panel to cover for the absence. If this is not possible, the Quality Officer reschedules the class, and the learners are informed as soon as possible.
- The school only cancels or defers classes as a last resort.

Chapter 5 Teaching and Learning

Aligned to Core Guideline 5 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Teaching and Learning Policy

The school works hard to ensure that learners achieve the best possible outcomes by creating and sustaining a positive, appropriate, and inclusive teaching and learning environment. All stakeholders, from members of the governance units to the learners, have a role in contributing to creating and sustaining this environment. The school seeks regular feedback from teaching staff, learners, and stakeholders and has the resources in place to provide teachers/tutors and learners with the resources they need to achieve their potential. The school has an overarching teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) strategy, to which programme-specific strategies are aligned leading to a strengthening and informing of pedagogic practices and programme design. The school's approach to teaching and learning is appropriate to the school's programmes and underpins programme development and delivery and takes the learner profile into consideration.

Responsibility

- The Quality Oversight Board is responsible for maintaining oversight of the teaching and learning environment and teaching, learning and assessment strategies.
- The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate facilities and resources are in place to ensure a high quality teaching and learning environment.
- The Quality Officer monitors the implementation of teaching, learning and assessment strategies and supports their implementation.
- The teachers/tutors are responsible for creating an environment where learners can maximise their potential.

Teaching and Learning Strategy

Our Teaching and Learning Aims

- To provide all learners with high quality and relevant teaching and learning experiences that encourage high aspiration and achievement.
- To ensure a positive, empowering and safe learning environment.
- To provide a learning experience that challenges learners and promotes autonomy.
- To provide learners with the opportunity to determine their own goals including providing clarity on potential further career and educational opportunities.
- To deliver academic excellence.

Principles Underpinning Teaching and Learning

- **Learner-Centred** - The learner is the focus and the centre of the teaching and learning process; we expect learners to commit to and share responsibility for the learning and engage in self-directed learning.
- **Suitable Learning Environment** - The school operates in a dynamic and changing teaching and learning environment. This includes the provision of a learning environment that encourages autonomy including the promotion of self-directed learning.
- **The Role of Experience** - Learners are facilitated to use their own experiences to gain a better understanding of the curriculum; they are able to draw on life experience to assist with learning.
- **Relevance** - The school focuses on providing clarity to learners on why learning material is important and relevant by applying new knowledge to real-life situations and problems.
- **Inclusivity** - The school's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is evident in teaching and learning.
- **Quality in Teaching and the Provision of Supports** - The quality of our teachers/tutors and the relationship between the learners and the teacher/tutor is crucial. The availability and accessibility of effective learner supports is an important element of the learning process. All involved in provision, particularly our teachers, have a responsibility to provide a high level of support for learners.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Teaching strategies are the techniques and methods our teachers/tutors apply to support learning. Strategies at programme-level are dynamic and are designed to meet the evolving needs of our learners and changing contexts.

A teacher/tutor selects the strategy most suited to the current level of knowledge of the learners, the concept being studied, and the stage in the learning journey of the learners.

We place a strong emphasis on the practical application of programme content in order to ensure the learners achieve the intended learning outcomes i.e., knowledge, skill and competence at completion. Learners typically learn best when they can practically apply the knowledge and skills.

Learning is an active process. The school expects learners to take ownership and share responsibility for their own learning, within a supportive environment. The school encourages them to use their life experience to support their learning. Learners are provided with opportunities to talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and/or something in real life, and apply it to their daily lives. The teachers/tutors give learners concrete, real-life situations to analyse and encourage learners to suggest readings, projects and learning activities. Learners are required to present their work in class and are encouraged to challenge the teacher's/tutors' and other learners' ideas and those presented in the learning materials in a respectful manner.

Learner Responsibilities

- Self-assess readiness to learn
- Define own learning goals

- Monitor own progress
- Take initiative for all stages of the learning process — be self-motivated
- Re-evaluate and adjust learning goals if necessary
- Proactively seek out the advice and guidance to teachers/tutors as and when needed

Teacher/Tutor Responsibilities

- Create a co-operative learning environment
- Help to motivate and direct the learning experience
- Facilitate learners' initiatives for learning
- Be available to the learners when they seek out advice and guidance
- Make resources to support self-directed learning easily available to the learners – videos, guides, articles, readings

Delivery Methodologies

Teachers/tutors employ a wide variety of methodologies as required by the subject matter and as specified in the programme descriptor agreed when the programme is validated. Teachers/tutors develop engaging course materials that fuel the learners' curiosity and passion and provide interactive sessions which make them feel involved. Teachers/tutors modify methods and materials as required to accommodate learners' different learning preferences as far as is possible within the programme framework. What follows are examples of the methodologies used in the school and are not intended to be prescriptive. The choice of methodologies will vary depending on the learner profile, the subject matter, the teachers/tutors and the learners' preferences. Teachers/tutors are encouraged to continually adapt and enhance the methodologies they use and to use their professional judgement as to what methodologies are best in the particular context, while being cognisant of the programme descriptor.

Directed Learning in a Traditional Classroom Setting (Face-To-Face)

Activity organised around scheduled class meetings measured by the number of hours spent 'in-person'. The classroom time is used for the delivery of content and the discussion and exploration of the content. Some examples of such methodologies include:

- Facilitated group work, group discussion and collaboration.
- Workshops and practical sessions to provide hands-on skills acquisition by learners.
- **Seminars** - where external expertise is brought into the classroom and is supported by meaningful discussion.
- **Real-life case studies** - Integrating a diversity of learners' experiences into a classroom.
- **Small Group Discussions** - The teachers/tutors utilise small group discussion as part of the face-to-face classroom sessions which encourages critical thinking and facilitates interaction with learners of varied experiences.

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a pedagogical strategy of "active learning". It is a learner-centred approach in which learners learn about a subject by working in groups to solve open-ended problems. The teacher/tutor provides learning activities and projects that are directly relatable to the vocational area. The teacher/tutor uses a variety of learning tools and tasks and guides the learners. The defining characteristics of PBL are:

- Learning is driven by challenging, open-ended problems;
- Learners work in small collaborative groups;
- Teachers/tutors take on the role as "facilitators" of learning.

Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their group and organise and direct the learning process with support from the teacher/tutor. PBL can enhance content knowledge and foster the development of communication, problem-solving, and self-directed learning skills. A realistic problem is presented that often has incomplete information. In some PBL approaches, the learners undertake research to get information about the problem; in others, the information is presented sequentially. The learners discuss the problems, define what they know, generate hypotheses, derive learning goals and organise further work. The learners then apply the results of their self-directed learning to solving the problem and they then present the results and their findings in class. The PBL cycle concludes with reflections on learning, problem solving, and collaboration. The teacher's/tutor's role is to guide and facilitate the learning process by asking open-ended questions, collecting feedback and ensuring the learners reflect on the learning process.

One-To-One or Small Group Tutorials (Teacher/Tutor-Learner)

Teachers/Tutors provide one-to-one/small group support to learners in the context of additional support. The face-to-face elements of the programme are supported and supplemented by these sessions between teacher/tutor and learner to answer queries, deliver formative feedback, discuss and resolve issues of individual concern, evaluate and monitor progress, and obtain feedback.

Collaborative Learning

The teachers/tutors encourage learners to work collaboratively. Characteristics of good learning are collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working together improves thinking and understanding. The teachers/tutors use cooperative learning groups and get learners to participate in activities that encourage them to work collaboratively, e.g. assigning group projects and presentations. They set up problem solving activities in small groups and have each group discuss their solutions with the class. Learners are encouraged to form study groups when preparing for exams and working on assignments. If there is a group of learners working collaboratively on an assignment that is part of the summative assessment, the teacher/tutor ensures that each person's grade is independent of those achieved by others and have various strategies for this such as, giving spot quizzes, meeting each member individually and meeting each group to review the project status.

Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom model flips the two fundamental learning stages of conventional classroom-based education. Traditionally, learners are introduced to a new topic in the classroom and then complete homework and assignments to individually explore or expand on the topic. In the flipped classroom, learners engage with new material individually before class and then use classroom time to expand on their understanding of it as a group under the guidance of the teacher/tutor. While the flipped classroom does not necessarily have to be mediated through the use of digital technology, teachers/tutors employing the flipped classroom approach generally introduce new topics through online videos, supporting articles, and sometimes making use of online discussion forums. They then use the time in the classroom to build upon this foundation knowledge in various ways.

Structure of Flipped Classes

The flipped classroom model has two main stages:

- Stage 1: New Information – Learners are introduced to a new topic or asked to understand new learning material ahead of the classroom lesson, typically through online videos and content but may also be achieved through articles, independent research, online discussions with other learners, etc.
- Stage 2: Further Exploration – During the lesson itself, the teacher/tutor facilitates further exploration of the topic through classroom-based discussion, problem-solving activities, and more meaningful learning opportunities. The aim is that learners attend the lesson with a basic understanding and leave with an advanced understanding.

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning is a critical element of the learning journey. The teachers/tutors clearly outline to learners what is meant by self-directed learning at Induction and throughout the programme and advise learners on strategies. They check in with the learners regularly to confirm that they are engaging in self-directed learning. If the self-directed learning is to be successful in helping the learner to achieve the learning outcomes, it requires the input of both the learner and the teacher/tutor. It is also important the learner and the teacher/tutor are in regular contact to check on progress with self-directed learning.

Field Trips

Field trips describe opportunities for incorporating outside experiences into a programme of education. This may take the form of once-off visits to relevant locations, or it may be more project-based field work with learners regularly visiting or working at one site as part of a project. The use of field trips as a teaching and learning strategy is a very effective way to provide learners with real-world experience. When learners move outside the classroom into the vocational world, they see the connections between what is happening in theory and in the 'real-world'. In this way, field trips can help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Work Experience and Work Placements

Work experience is a valuable part of the learning experience, allowing learners to get a taste of the realities of working in their chosen career. Work experience is an integral part of all programmes which lead to major awards at Level 5 and Level 6 of the NFQ. Generally learners source a placement with a local employer. Some partake in work experience throughout the academic year, others in block placements. While learners are encouraged to source their own placement, they can seek the help of their teacher/tutor if they are unable to do so.

The school is committed to ensuring that the work-based learning environments are appropriate and provide a meaningful experience and an opportunity for the learners to develop the skills and competencies that help them succeed in the workplace. The work experience teacher/tutor is responsible for monitoring the quality of the placement using the following checks:

- Is the learner getting valuable, career-focused learning opportunities not available in the classroom?
- Has the learner an opportunity to identify their professional and personal strengths and weaknesses in the working environment?
- Does the placement allow the learner to showcase their skills, competencies and abilities to the employer?
- Is the placement likely to increase the learner's self-confidence in relation to applying for employment and their chances of securing employment?
- Are the structures in place to ensure that the learner is appropriately assessed for certification purposes
- Is there an opportunity for the learner to self-reflect on their experience in the workplace?

The Tutor Learner Relationship

A positive and mutually respectful relationship between the teachers/tutors and the learners is a key element in successful teaching and learning. The school provides for small classes and appropriate teacher/tutor to learner ratios. The teachers/tutors give personalised feedback on performance, progress and assignments. They engage with learners on a personal level and discuss their educational and career goals, advising them about transfer and progression pathways and career opportunities. They proactively seek out learners who appear to be struggling or are frequently absent and offer assistance. Teachers/tutors ensure that the learners know how and when they contact them outside of scheduled classroom hours.

Providing Feedback to Learners

Feedback is a simple yet powerful tool in the learning process and an essential element of the learning journey. Feedback is any means used to build learner confidence, challenge them, support self-directed learning, inform them about their progress, successes and areas needing improvement. Feedback motivates the learner and helps them to improve performance.

To be effective, feedback must be:

- Continuous, constructive, and individualised

- Informative and useful, clear, concise, unambiguous and timely
- Improvement-focused, designed to improve performance and motivate the learner
- Clearly linked to learning outcomes/targets

Steps in Providing Feedback

Providing feedback must be planned and decisions made about when and how often will feedback be given, e.g.:

- After each assessment has been marked?
- At the end of a section of work?
- At specific times during the programme?

How and in what format will feedback be given, e.g.:

- Written comments on learners' work?
- Formal written feedback using a template?
- Learner self-evaluation?
- In the classroom
- At small group meetings
- Individual meetings where teachers/tutors meet learners on a one-to one basis for the purpose of checking on progress and providing feedback.

Giving feedback to learners, teachers/tutors:

- Use positive language
- Identify and note strengths
- Give specific feedback, with examples or direct references
- Use assessment criteria and marking schemes to help to give objective feedback and to suggest specific options for improvement
- Provide feedback in a timely manner

The school regards learners as partners in the learning process, so it ensures that they are prepared for the feedback process. The learner has responsibilities with regard to feedback as well as the teacher/tutor; the teacher/tutor provides the feedback, the learner acts on it. Learners are encouraged to self-reflect on activities that are subject to feedback prior to any feedback discussion. The school also encourages learners to document their own action plan following a feedback session.

Feedback from Learners

Learner feedback is an essential element of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The school asks for feedback through mid-term and end-of-term evaluations and uses the information to address issues that the learner raises in their feedback. Feedback also informs programme development. In addition, learners can raise any concerns or feedback they may have about the teaching and learning with either the course teacher/tutor, or instructor, or Quality Officer at any

time between the formal feedback opportunities. There are also complaints and appeals procedures in place that the learners are familiar with and are comfortable using.

Teaching and Learning Environment

The school aims to create a positive, safe, and inclusive teaching and learning environment where learners, teachers/tutors and all involved in provision are appropriately supported, challenged and respected. A well-planned and well-resourced learning environment enables learners to learn effectively, and helps learners feel motivated, inspired and engaged. This in turn assists learners to achieve their full potential.

The learning environment also needs to be flexible and adaptable as far as practicable to accommodate diverse learner needs. The school ensures that the physical and IT infrastructure is adequate and suitable for our programmes and for our learner profile. Class numbers are kept small ensuring individual support. Facilities should be attractive, well-maintained and welcoming, supporting both formal and informal learning.

The school has a Learner Management System (LMS) to support teaching, learning and assessment.

Ensuring an Inclusive Environment

An inclusive learning environment makes success possible for all learners including those that need to be accommodated in some way. The school's learner population is diverse, and the school has a duty and responsibility to adapt their teaching and learning strategies when necessary to recognise and accommodate this diversity. The school assesses learner needs to identify individual learners' accommodation requirements. A needs assessment involves collecting information about the strengths and learning needs in order to understand the support they need and how best they can be facilitated. The school can avail of public funding designated for supports and accommodations for learners with disabilities. Funding enables the school to provide support services and specialised equipment.

Monitoring Learner Engagement in Learning

The teachers/tutors use a number of measures to monitor learner engagement which are indicators that learning is taking place. These measures include:

- Levels of attendance
- Levels of learner engagement with learning resources and materials on Teams
- Participation in group activities
- Levels of interaction with the teacher/tutor
- Assignment submissions
- Reaction/follow-up to formative feedback

Health and Safety

The health and safety of learners, teachers/tutors, and all members of the Programme Team is a critical element in maintaining an appropriate and effective learning environment. The school complies with all relevant legislation and regulations and takes all practicable measures to minimise risk and ensure high standards. The school addresses health and safety at both learner and teacher/tutor Induction and in the respective handbooks. The school has regular fire and evacuation drills. Training equipment is regularly inspected, serviced, updated, and certified as fit-for-purpose. The school has an **Accident/Incident Reporting Procedure**, and documents risk to health and safety in the Risk Register. The school's **Safety Statement**, which is updated annually, is prominently displayed in the school.

Chapter 6 Assessment of Learners

Aligned to Core Guideline 6 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy Statement

The school aims to have an assessment system and processes which are:

- understood fully by learners and teachers/tutors;
- designed with the learners and the programme needs in mind;
- secure and consistent in implementation;
- valid for the purpose of certification by QQI;
- fair in terms of access and process;
- underpinned by procedures and practices that are fair and transparent;
- internally verified as consistent across all assessment activities and assessment results recorded accurately;
- externally authenticated as consistent with national standards;
- overseen by a Result Approval Panel;
- facilitate learners who wish to appeal a result.

The assessment policy and procedures are designed to be consistent with QQI's assessment policy and to meet the requirements of the following QQI guidelines:

- ***Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers Revised 2013. Version 2 - revised 2018)***
- ***FETAC Guidelines for Internal Verification***
- ***Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators***

Responsibilities

- The Results Approval Panel maintains oversight in the school of assessment processes and trends, approves results, and makes recommendations for corrective action.
- The Quality Officer has overall responsibility for assessment.
- The teachers/tutors mark and grade the assessments and are responsible for ensuring all assessment activities are carried out as set out in the programme descriptors.

Overview of the Assessment Process

Assessment

- The assessment policies, processes and procedures are agreed with QQI and regularly reviewed and updated.
- The Programme Design Team devise assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria when developing a programme.
- The teachers/tutors assess the learners and mark and grade the assessment evidence.
- The teachers/tutors submit the assessment portfolios according to the checklist provided and the Internal Verifier records the outcomes.

Authentication

- The Internal Verifier verifies that assessment procedures have been applied consistently across all assessment activities and that the assessment results are recorded accurately.
- The Quality Officer appoints an External Authenticator based on recommendations following approval by the Quality Oversight Board.
- The External Authenticator moderates assessment results by sampling learner evidence using the school's sampling strategy.

Results Approval and Issue

- The Results Approval Panel reviews, approves and signs-off assessment results.
- The Quality Officer emails approved results to learners.

Certification

- The Quality Officer submits learner results to QQI.
- Learners are allowed ten working days to lodge an appeal.
- The Quality Officer processes appeals.
- The Quality Officer issues award certificates.

Assessment Planning and Design

The Programme Design Team considers all aspects of assessment and sets out a comprehensive assessment strategy at the design stage which is subsequently agreed with QQI as part of the validation process. The assessment strategy contains detail on how formative and summative assessment and feedback is provided, assignment briefs, marking schemes, assessment schedules, exam questions and solutions, based on award specification, the programme and learner profile and resources required for assessment. The detail of the assessment strategy is set out clearly in the programme descriptor.

When a programme is scheduled for delivery, the teacher/tutor drafts the assessment schedule and sets out details in the form of a programme assessment plan which details dates for submissions/exams and feedback.

New assessment instruments are reviewed and signed off by the Quality Officer before they are distributed to learners.

The Quality Officer makes arrangements for reasonable accommodation and informs the teacher/tutor.

The Quality Officer agrees the appointment of a suitably qualified External Authenticator with the Quality Oversight Board.

The Quality Officer inputs learner details onto QQI QBS. allowing sufficient time to deal and resolve invalid entries. and updates the certification calendar which sets out dates for return of the assessment portfolios, internal verification, external authentication, results approval and issue of results.

Marking Schemes

A marking scheme sets out the specific assessment points against which the assessment evidence is judged and applied by the assessor to determine to what extent the learner has demonstrated the required standard. Marking schemes must be consistent with the relevant detail in the module; the assessment criteria, the learning outcomes mapped to the assessment technique/task in question and the assessment guidelines. They must also be consistent with the detail in the assessment brief. The marking scheme must allocate marks to everything asked of the learner in the assessment brief.

Model Answers

The teacher/tutor develops model answers alongside an examination paper and related marking scheme. The teacher/tutor may also develop an outline solution to a non-examination assessment (an assignment), but this is not a requirement.

Depending on the nature of the assessment, the model answer may be:

- one answer
- a range of acceptable answers
- a list of minimum acceptable key points
- an indication/guideline of what form a response may take

Information on Assessment to Learners and Teachers

Assessment information is made available to learners in the Learner Handbook, at Induction and on the LMS. The teachers/tutors distribute copies of assessment timetables, exam notices and regulations at Induction. The assessment timetable includes submission deadline and examination

dates. Teachers/tutors also provide learners with assessment briefs (a detailed set of instructions outlining the assessment requirements, deadlines, submission procedures and assessment criteria) for each piece of assessment. The briefs are based on the assessment strategy validated by QQI. Learner responsibilities around assessment and examination regulations are detailed in the Learner Handbook and are reinforced throughout the programme by the teacher/tutor.

Teachers/tutors must be familiar with *Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers Revised 2013. Version 2 - revised 2018*) on which the design of the QA procedures is based and with Chapter 6 of the QA Manual.

The Quality Officer meets the teacher/tutor before the programme begins to talk through the assessment strategy, the assessment schedule, assessment portfolio checklist, assessment briefs, marking sheets, arrangements for examination and reasonable accommodation.

Security of Assessment Materials and Related Processes

The school has systems in place to protect the integrity of assessment documentation and materials, assessment evidence, assessment results and records. The Quality Officer is responsible for secure storage (hard copy and electronic) and stores all documentation, etc., in an electronically protected storeroom and/or password-protected shared drive, granting access on a needs-only basis.

The Quality Officer adds details of assessment submission and results for each learner to their learner record which is maintained electronically under programme name and number.

Assessment materials are stored in a secure area on the LMS which is encrypted with restricted password-protected access. Copies of assessment materials are printed only if and when they are needed.

The Quality Officer records the outcomes of assessment and uploads results data to the QBS at the earliest available time.

Teachers/tutors are responsible for the secure storage of all assessment-related materials while in their possession and must report any breaches to the Quality Officer as a matter of urgency.

The school's approach to academic conduct is highlighted at Induction and in the handbooks and there is a copy on the LMS.

Academic Integrity

Definition:

Academic misconduct is any action which gains, attempts to gain, or assists others in gaining or attempting to gain unfair academic advantage.

The school assumes that learners will be honest in all matters. However, they have a procedure in place to deal with incidents or suspected incidence of academic misconduct if they occur. Learners

are informed of the procedures in relation to assessment malpractice, including plagiarism, use of essay mills and referencing techniques in the Learner Handbook and at learner Induction. Assessment malpractice is addressed at learner and teacher Induction and in the Learner and Teacher/Tutor Handbooks. There are also guidelines on the LMS and the standards of academic conduct expected are referenced by the teacher/tutor throughout the programme.

The teacher/tutor is the main source of guidance and information for learners in relation to academic integrity. The school also provides guidelines, video content and reference documents on the LMS which explain the concept of academic integrity and help to enhance learners' referencing skills.

Practices that may breach academic integrity include:

- Plagiarism. – the presentation of someone else's work as one's own. Examples of plagiarism include taking texts from websites, using essay banks, and presenting works or sections of works written by another person.
- Falsification of data.
- Collusion and cheating in examinations.
- Submitting the same or similar work for more than one assessment.
- Failing to reference sources of information or data appropriately.

Measures in Place Regarding Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

- The teachers/tutors discuss academic integrity/plagiarism at Induction and throughout the programme to ensure all learners are aware of what constitutes plagiarism. They use the following FESS handbooks as reference:
 - **Academic Writing Handbook for Learners** in the FET Sector. FESS. 2019
 - **Referencing Handbook** FESS. 2019
- The school provides academic writing workshops.
- The teachers/tutors provide examples of what constitutes plagiarism and ensure that learners clearly understand the difference between acceptable collaboration and plagiarism.
- Teachers/tutors clearly articulate expectations for citations and referencing and teach learners how to cite and reference.
- Teachers/tutors focus on forming strong relationship with the learners. They know their learners' work, standards etc., and are alert to situations where assignments might be out of sync with in-class performance.
- The teachers/tutors are always open to answering questions and clarifying expectations about assignments.
- The teachers/tutors encourage learners to submit drafts and provide formative feedback on drafts.
- The assessment strategy is designed with the aim of reducing or eliminating the potential for plagiarism. Teachers/tutors focus on setting authentic and meaningful assessment tasks that reduces the scope for plagiarism. Where possible and relevant, they use real-life scenarios asking learners to relate what they are being asked to do to their personal experiences.
- Where appropriate, a reflective element is incorporated into assessment tasks.
- The requirement to reference and provide a list of sources with writing assignments is highlighted in the assessment briefs.

- The school ensures that assessment briefs are changed regularly and avoid repeatedly using the same assignment topics.
- Marks are awarded for correct referencing and penalties imposed if plagiarism is detected (details of the possible penalties are detailed in the QA manual).
- Teachers/tutors lead by example and are careful to cite sources they use.
- Learners must complete, sign, date and submit an authorship statement confirming that all assessment evidence they are submitting is their own work, is genuine, not plagiarised and properly referenced. All assignments and authorship statements are submitted via the LMS ensuring that we have a secure digital record of assignment submission.
- Learners have access to resources on the LMS to guide them including:
 - **Academic Writing Handbook for Learners in the FET Sector**. FESS. 2019
 - **Referencing Handbook** FESS. 2019
 - **A Learner's Guide to Academic Integrity** ETBI
 - <https://library.etbi.ie/referencing>
- There is information about academic integrity in the Learner and Teacher/Tutor Handbooks.
- The school has a documented procedure for dealing with breaches of academic integrity.

Procedure for Dealing the Breaches of Academic Integrity

1. If a teacher/tutor suspects a breach of academic conduct where a learner has sought to gain an unfair advantage, they bring the details and any evidence they have to the attention of the Quality Officer to decide how to deal with it in a consistent, transparent and fair manner.
2. If the Quality Officer agrees that the incident requires further investigation, the teacher/tutor completes an **Academic Misconduct Report Form** and supplies evidence of the suspected misconduct.
3. The Quality Officer conducts an initial investigation of the alleged misconduct and determines if there is a case.
 - a. If the Quality Officer concludes that there is no case, they notify the teacher/tutor giving reasons for the decision.
4. If the Quality Officer concludes that there is a case, they invite the learner and the teacher/tutor to a meeting to discuss the concern. The Quality Officer explains the purpose of the meeting and includes a copy of the marked-up piece of work (if plagiarism). The learner may be accompanied at the interview.
5. The Quality Officer asks the learner to bring any evidence that refutes the incident and evidence of their work to give them the opportunity to demonstrate that the work presented is their own original work in the case of plagiarism.

Where plagiarism is established, one or more of the following penalties may be imposed:

- A caution or written warning to the learner for a number of unattributed sentences or use of an unattributed paragraph.
- A mark of zero for the assessment with the possibility of resubmitting the assignment for a maximum mark of 50% for use of a greater number of unattributed paragraphs (or where there is evidence of very substantial or disproportionate amounts of material taken directly from other sources, even with acknowledgement of the sources).

- A mark of zero for that assessment with no opportunity to re-submit – for substantial use of unattributed paragraphs or a first repeat offence.
 - Removal from the programme.
6. The Quality Officer details what has been alleged, shows the learner a copy of their work, gives the learner an opportunity to justify the work and invites the learner to admit or deny responsibility.
 7. If the learner admits to plagiarism or if the learner cannot confirm that what is presented is their own original work the assessment receives a zero mark.
 8. Following the interview, if the Quality Officer is satisfied that the case exists, an appropriate penalty is decided based on the learner's plagiarism record (if any) and the extent of the plagiarism.
 9. The Quality Officer notifies the learner, the teacher/tutor, and the Results Approval Panel (through the Internal Verification Report) in writing, of the decision and any penalty imposed.
 10. If the case is considered to be sufficiently serious, the Quality Officer may refer it to the Results Approval Panel.
 11. The learner has the right to appeal the decision to the Results Approval Panel using the appeals process.
 12. If the learner does not engage with the process, by not responding or by refusing to attend an interview, the assessment receives a zero mark.
 13. If two or more learners present identical pieces of work, the Quality Officer and the teacher/tutor interview all the learners involved.
 14. If the learner who plagiarised admits to it, the other learner's assessment work is marked as normal while the plagiarised work receives a zero mark.
 15. If learners copy each other's work both receive a zero mark.
 16. Learners can seek assistance from the Quality Officer to deal with a plagiarism case. If a learner seeks assistance, the Quality Officer appoints an Independent Advisor to assist the learner.

Conduct of Examinations

All exams are invigilated by an invigilator appointed by the Quality Officer from a panel of invigilators who have been briefed the Quality Officer. Invigilators must be familiar and comply with the ***Invigilators Guidelines*** which is talked through at the briefing. If a candidate takes an exam in separate room, an invigilator must be present in that room. If an invigilator suspects a learner of cheating in an examination, they retrieve the evidence of cheating and complete a ***Misconduct Report Form***, which is forwarded, with the alleged evidence, immediately to the Quality Officer who meets with the learner with the invigilator and follows the same procedure as for a suspected plagiarism incident.

Invigilators must complete and return the ***Examination Attendance Register, Invigilation Report*** and Seating Plan at the end of the exam using the templates provided.

The use of examination questions is rotated for each exam and a learner sitting a repeat examination will get a different paper.

Quality Assuring Assessment in the Workplace

One of the responsibilities of the workplace supervisors who take the learners on placement as part of the Work Experience module is to assess and rate the learner's performance under a number of stated criteria and complete the Workplace Supervisor Report using the template provided by the work experience teacher/tutor. The teacher/tutor briefs the learners in advance of the assessment and guides them in undertaking the assessment. The work experience teacher/tutor reviews the completed Workplace Supervisor Reports, countersigns them and may comment on them. The school makes the completed reports available to the External Authenticator who reviews a sample focussing on supervisors who are assessing for the first time.

Presentation and Submission of Assignments

Details of how an assignment is to be presented and submitted are set out clearly in the assessment brief. All assessments must be submitted in the format detailed in the assessment brief. The school advises learners to maintain copies of all submissions, if possible, for their own reference as it does not return assessment evidence. Depending on the form and format of assessment evidence, it may not be possible to maintain a copy, e.g. an artefact, a piece of art. In this case, the school will arrange for the return of the assessment evidence to the learner after the appeals period has lapsed.

In order to ensure fairness, all assessments must be submitted on or before the dates set out on the assessment timetable (unless otherwise notified by the teacher/tutor). The school can refuse to accept assignments received after the deadline has passed unless an extension has been granted. The school grants extensions to learners who have genuine difficulty in meeting a submission deadline. Requests for compassionate consideration and extenuating circumstances must be submitted in advance of the submission date to the Quality Officer using the **Extension Request Form** with supporting verifiable evidence if relevant, e.g. medical certificate in case of sickness. Each application for compassionate consideration or extenuating circumstances is judged on its own merits. In line with QQI guidelines, late submission of evidence does not affect the marks awarded. If the assessment evidence is accepted by the school, it is marked and graded in accordance with the standards for the award. The marks and grade awarded are determined solely on the basis of the assessment evidence submitted.

Repeating and Deferring Assessment

If a learner fails an assessment, the teacher/tutor contacts them directly and gives them detailed feedback on the areas where they fell short. Information relating to repeating is included in the Learner Handbook. A learner must notify the Quality Officer in writing if they wish to repeat an assessment and the Quality Officer agrees the arrangements with them. The school allows one opportunity to repeat an assessment and does not charge a fee to repeat.

If a learner cannot complete the programme for any reason, they can apply for a deferral using the **Deferral Application Form** if they have a valid reason for the deferral. If the deferral is granted, the learner can complete the programme later. The Quality Officer reviews the request and if it is practically possible and in the best interests of the learner, grants the deferral. The Quality Officer contacts the learner to make arrangements and maintains details on the learner record.

Reasonable Accommodation

The school clearly explains what it means by reasonable accommodation in the context of assessment at Induction and in the Learner Handbook. Examples of adaptations it can/has made include:

- Rest periods during examinations
- Use of a scribe or reader
- Oral instead of written examinations
- Extended time to complete assignments

The school urges learners to let it know when they apply/as soon as possible if they think they need or may need additional supports for assessment and to complete and submit the **Reasonable Accommodation Request Form**. The Quality Officer reviews requests on a case-by-case basis, discusses the requirements with the teacher and signs-off on a request only if it is reasonable and practicable to accommodate the learner and that it does not affect the standards of the given award. The Quality Officer agrees the proposed arrangements in advance with the teacher/tutor and guides them in relation to adapting assessment. The Internal Verifier includes details of any adaptations made/reasonable accommodation provided in the **Internal Verification Report** to highlight them to the attention of the External Authenticator.

Marking and Grading

- The Quality Officer monitors the standards of marking and grading. Marking and grading is addressed at teacher/tutor Induction and in the Teacher/Tutor Handbook.
- All teachers/tutors use the same assessment instruments which results in a standardised approach to assessment and consistency in marking and grading.
- Teachers/tutors are provided with detailed marking schemes which shows clearly how the assessment evidence is to be marked and graded. These are reviewed and updated regularly.
- The Quality Officer meets the teacher/tutor before they begin delivery and discusses the assessment briefs, the assessment criteria and the marking scheme.
- The Internal Verifier reviews all marks and grades and highlights any concerns, including any concerns about inconsistency in marking in the **Internal Verification Report** for review/discussion with the External Authenticator.
- The Internal Verifier pays particular attention by marking and grading on new programmes or by new teachers/tutors and these are included in the sample for the External Authenticator.
- The school asks the External Authenticator to record any observations in relation to inconsistencies in marking in their report. If they have any concerns in this regard, these are discussed by the Results Approval Panel and a decision is made with regard to corrective action.
- Any changes made to teachers'/tutors' marking by the External Authenticator are examined and highlighted by the Internal Verifier and discuss with the Quality Officer.

Internal Verification

The school carries out internal verification in line with QQI guidelines set out in the **Quality Assurance Assessment Guidelines for Providers** 2013 (pages 24 and 25) and the **FETAC Guidelines for Internal Verification**.

The Internal Verifier must have the expertise, resources, and time required to complete internal verification to a high standard.

The Internal Verifier:

- Checks that teachers/tutors have adhered to the school's assessment procedures and applied them consistently across assessment activities.
- Checks that the assessment results are calculated, transcribed and recorded correctly and accurately.
- Highlights any irregularities or deviations from the normal distribution of marks.
- Takes corrective action if results and/or assessment evidence is missing: contacting the tutor, rechecking assessments and/or evidence for mislaid items, reviewing Attendance Registers and Submission Logs to ensure evidence was received.
- Completes and signs the **Internal Verification Report** including observations and recommendations.
- Submits an agenda and a copy of the **Internal Verification Report** and a copy of the school's **Sampling Strategy** to the External Authenticator by the agreed date prior to the authentication visit.
- Makes the **Internal Verification Report** available to members of the Results Approval Panel in advance of the Panel meeting.
- Presents the **Internal Verification Report** at the RAP meeting, highlighting any concerns or issues documented in the report, particularly issues which may need to be addressed with corrective action.

External Authentication

The school arranges for the authentication of assessment by a suitably qualified independent person as part of the quality assurance of assessment. Through a process of moderation, the External Authenticator confirms that learners have been assessed fairly and consistently, that the marking and grading is valid and reliable, and that the assessment evidence meets the national standard for the award.

Selection and Appointment of the External Authenticator

FESU maintains a panel of suitably experienced and trained External Authenticators and makes it available to the schools.

External Authenticators on the panel must meet the stated selection criteria.

External Authenticator Selection Criteria

- Must have appropriate training, preferably the ETBI training for the ETB National Directory for FET.
- Have experience of external authentication and/or external examining.
- Possess general technical/subject matter expertise.
- Be competent to confirm that the school is implementing its agreed quality assurance policies and procedures.
- Have familiarity with the QQI QA assessment framework.
- Have familiarity with the common QA system implemented by the schools.
- Possess appreciation of the school context, approach and learner profile and knowledge of how the Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) QA Network operates.
- Be independent of the school, its programmes and the teachers/tutors.

Where possible the same External Authenticator is used by as many schools as possible within the Network for the same certification period. If the same External Authenticator is used by more than one school, the External Authenticator is asked to submit an additional report which details the level of consistency and variances across the schools. The school rotates the use of External Authenticators and does not contract the services of the same authenticator for more than three consecutive certification periods.

FESU presents details of the proposed EA panel members and the evidence of suitability to the Quality Oversight Board for approval. Members of the panel must be approved by the Quality Oversight Board. FESU reviews the panel every two years and refreshes it if necessary, getting the approval of the Quality Oversight Board. FESU briefs the External Authenticators before they join the panel to ensure they understand each school's context and how the Network operates.

The Quality Officer sources a suitably qualified External Authenticator from the EA Panel and seeks the approval of the QOB for the appointment. When the Quality Oversight Board has approved the appointment, the Quality Officer:

- records evidence of the suitability of the authenticator;
- makes arrangements for the authentication visit;
- liaises with the External Authenticator and issues a contract and guidelines setting out what is involved and the school's expectations;
- lets the teachers/tutors know about the arrangements for authentication and ask them to make themselves available if the External Authenticator needs to contact them to discuss results;
- makes a copy of the **QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators** available to the External Authenticator;
- provides the External Authenticator with a copy of the Network **External Authentication Report** template;
- agrees payment and date for submission of the completed **External Authentication Report**;
- invites the External Authenticator to attend the Results Approval Panel (RAP) meeting to report on the outcomes of authentication and to help the school to identify strengths, gaps and areas for improvement;

- submits an agenda and a copy of the **Internal Verification Report** and a copy of the school's **Sampling Strategy** to the External Authenticator by the agreed date prior to the authentication visit.

Both the External Authenticator and the Quality Officer sign the **External Authentication Report** which must be based on the Network's External Authentication Report template and the Quality Officer stores them securely in hard copy and electronically and maintains them indefinitely.

Sampling Strategy

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of learner results and assessment evidence for the purposes of completing internal verification and external authentication. The school's **Sampling Strategy** is designed to suit its provision and to be fair and consistent, enabling the Internal Verifier to identify any deviation from standards, thus helping them to ascertain whether the school's assessment procedures are being implemented appropriately. The sampling strategy is applied by the Internal Verifier and the External Authenticator.

Criteria for Sampling

The sample must:

- be representative of all teachers/tutors;
- be sufficient in size to enable sound judgments to be made about the fairness and consistency of assessment decisions;
- cover the full range of attainment in terms of results;
- include a random selection of evidence for each grade;
- identify evidence where the results are borderline;
- include new teachers'/tutors' judgments/decisions.

Number of assessment portfolios	Number of assessment portfolios to be included in the sample
0 → 12	All
13 → 50	13
51 → 100	20
101 → 200	25
201 → 300	30
300 → 400	40

Assessment portfolios selected by the External Authenticator must enable them to determine the cut-off points. The remaining assessment portfolios are randomly chosen until the sample quota is reached.

Results Approval Panel

Monitoring Authentication and Results Approval Process

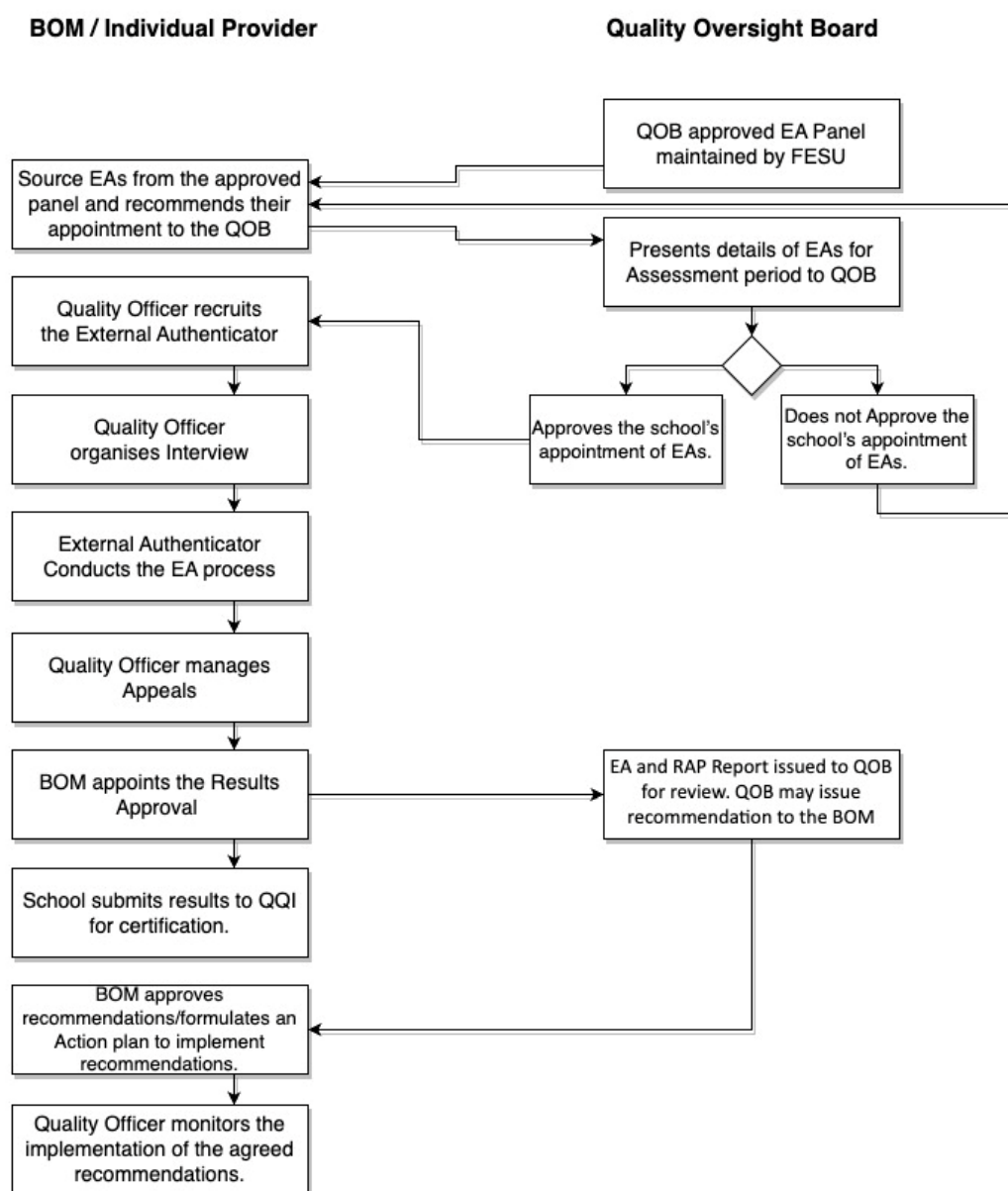


Figure 3 Monitoring Authentication and Results Approval Process

The Board of Management appoints a Results Approval Panel (RAP) which has an external chair, usually from one of the other schools within the Network, to ensure the independence of the results approval process. The RAP operates under a documented **Terms of Reference** ([Appendix 1](#)) to formally review and approve results data, review the **Internal Verification** and **External Authentication Reports** and check that the assessment results are fully quality assured and signed-

off prior to submission to QQI for certification and issued to learners. The Panel highlights any issues identified and improvements recommended and any need for corrective action. The Results Approval Panel carefully considers any changes to marking and grading recommended by the External Authenticator and makes a decision. If the panel decides not to accept a recommendation for change/s, a detailed justification for this decision is recorded in the RAP report.

The Quality Officer:

- convenes a meeting of the Panel for each certification period;
- issues an agenda and supporting documents (**Internal Verification** and **External Authentication Reports**) to members in advance;
- prepares a report of the meeting and a record of any decision regarding corrective actions, which is signed by the Chair and retained for auditing and monitoring purposes.

Issue of Results and Award Certificates

The final steps in the results approval process are the submission of results to QQI and the issue of results to learners. The Quality Officer:

- makes results available to learners by email as soon as possible after they have been approved, advises them of appeal deadlines and the date they should receive their QQI award certificate;
 - Learners are allowed ten working days to lodge an appeal.
- completes the data entry, quality assurance and data edits;
- submits the results to QQI via the QBS (at this point, the data can only be edited by QQI);
- completes the sign-off/declaration on the QBS that the data is ready for certification confirming that the school has implemented all elements of the authentication process and adhered to all agreed procedures;
- prints off the **Final Statement of Results** from the QBS (available after the certification date for the period).

QQI issues award certificates for all results received, except those flagged as being under appeal, according to a pre-defined schedule, at the end of February, April, July, August, October and December each year. The school receives the award certificates from QQI approximately 2 to 3 weeks after the Final Submission Date for the certification period.

On receipt of the award certificates, the Quality Officer:

- logs receipt of the award certificates in the school's **Award Certificate Register**;
- checks the certificates to make sure the name and other details are correct and if not, contacts QQI;
- issues award certificates.

Corrective Action

The school takes corrective action in the event that any error, omission and/or deliberate act on the part of a learner or teacher/tutor/assessor or anyone involved in the assessment process impacts or potentially impacts on the validity of the assessment process. They ask the External Authenticator to

identify any areas where they consider there is a need to instigate corrective action and/or to identify any irregularities and to detail their concerns in the **External Authentication Report**, providing sufficient detail to enable the Results Approval Panel to make recommendations for corrective action. Any areas of potential vulnerability identified by the Internal Verifier or the External Authenticator, or any teacher/tutor/staff member involved in the assessment process is considered by the RAP. In particular, recommendations and comments from the External Authenticator in relation to grade changes are considered. The Panel considers any issues identified and makes recommendations. If the implementation of corrective action results in a delay in the issue of results to a learner, the Quality Officer contacts the learner to explain.

Feedback to Teachers Following Results Approval

The Quality Officer meets with the teachers/tutors after the results have been approved and discusses the feedback from the External Authenticator and the RAP with them and integrates it into programme review and development. The teachers/tutors and other members of the Programme Team use the learning from the results approval process and RAP recommendations to inform and improve future practice.

Feedback to Learners

Teachers/tutors are responsible for providing timely and constructive, formal and informal feedback to learners which helps to ensure a successful outcome to assessment. The teachers/tutors use formative assessment and feedback throughout the programme to support the learning process, aid revision and inform learners and themselves on progress. This feedback must contain enough detail to enable learners to evaluate and improve their performance. The teachers/tutors encourage learners to ask for additional feedback and/or further clarification if they need it and make themselves available throughout the programme to provide formative feedback on a one-to-one basis. How, when, how often, and in what format feedback is provided to learners is agreed at the pre-programme briefing. It is usually given at specific stages of the programme and provided in the form of written comments on learners' work, or, in some instances, written feedback is provided using the **Assessment Feedback Form**. Teachers/tutors are required to comment on the assessment scripts when they are marking, and the Internal Verifier checks for evidence of feedback provided by the teachers/tutors.

Formative Assessment

Teachers/tutors use formative assessment and feedback on an ongoing basis to monitor learning and learner progress throughout the learning journey, to engage and motivate the learners and to monitor and improve their own performance. The school uses the outcomes of formative feedback to inform continuous professional development for teachers/tutors. There are formative assessment tasks for each programme which the learners undertake at various stages through the programme. Formative assessment/feedback helps learners identify their own strengths, weaknesses and gaps in knowledge/skills and improve their learning. The teachers/tutors monitor learners' participation and level of engagement in the classroom and use the results to modify their instruction to enhance its effectiveness. The Programme Design Team documents the formative assessment strategy at the programme design stage, and it is detailed in the programme descriptor.

Summative Assessment and Feedback

Summative assessment is used for certification purposes and is based on the cumulative learning that takes place. Assessment undertaken for the purpose of achieving QQI certification is summative assessment. Summative assessment instruments are designed by the Programme Design Team, based on the techniques and weightings detailed in the QQI award specification (if applicable) and validated programme and are discussed at the pre-programme briefing.

Recheck and Appeals

The Quality Officer is responsible for coordinating appeals in accordance with the school's documented procedure ([Appendix 5](#)), and complaints about the assessment process, ensuring that learners are aware of and familiar with the procedure, and that the procedure is implemented fairly and effectively. The teachers/tutors let the learners know about rechecks and appeals, and complaints at Induction and they are also addressed in the Learner Handbook. The school reminds learners of the opportunity to appeal when the approved results are issued to them. The Quality Officer retains copies of **Appeals Forms** and correspondence with appellants.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Assessment

- The RAP examines assessment outcomes and trends, benchmarking assessment outcomes against those from previous years and against national data and makes recommendations for corrective action.
- The recommended corrective actions are presented to the Quality Oversight Board as part of the RAP report.
- The Quality Officer reviews assessment briefs annually and updates if necessary.
- The Quality Officer reviews and evaluates the assessment/certification process and draws up an improvement plan based on recommendations contained in the reports and agreed by the Results Approval Panel.
- The QOB and the BOM review the Results Approval Panel report and may make recommendations.
- The Quality Officer monitors the implementation of the agreed actions and reports back at subsequent RAP meetings.
- The school asks learners for their views of the adequacy of feedback provided in the **Learner Feedback Form**.
- The work experience teacher/tutor asks the learners for feedback on the quality of the assessment in the workplace when they are reviewing the work placement, and records anything of significance and submits details to the Quality Officer.

Chapter 7 Supports for Learners

Aligned to Core Guideline 7 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy Statement

In keeping with its learner-centred ethos, the school is committed to providing learners with a range of complementary and integrated supports and resources which are built into the design of programmes. All learning resources and learner supports are designed to meet the needs of the programme and the learner profile and are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis. The school is committed to equality of access and attainment among learners and recognises the diversity of identities and experiences and treats each person with honesty, dignity, fairness, accountability, and integrity.

Responsibility

- The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate supports for learners.
- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of the availability and quality of the supports.
- The Quality Officer monitors the adequacy and effectiveness of supports and reported on them to the Quality Oversight Board who may recommend enhancements.
- The teacher/tutor is the primary point of contact and source of information and support for the learner. If the teacher/tutor is not in a position to respond to queries, they redirect the query to the Quality Officer. They also monitor the supports and resources while delivering the programme and bring any issues to the attention of the Quality Officer.

Information for Prospective Learners and Learners

The school lets prospective learners and learners know about the types of accommodations and supports it provides (and what limitations exist) to help them make informed decisions and choices. To ensure that supports are visible and easily accessed by learners, the teachers/tutors talk about supports at Induction and throughout the programme. There is information in the Learner Handbook. The school fully documents its process around reasonable accommodation, and ensures learners are fully informed in advance of enrolment of the supports which are available to them.

Learner Induction

All learners are inducted by the teachers/tutors. The aim of Induction is to ensure that learners have all the information they need about the programme and supports to ensure a successful outcome for them. At the start of a programme, the teacher/tutor inducts the learners and talks through the following documents:

- Learner Handbook.
- The programme timetable and assessment schedule.
- Details of appeals and complaints procedures.
- Assessment briefs and assessment criteria.
- Reasonable accommodation and compassionate consideration.

There is also a tutorial on using the Learning Management System and accessing the virtual classroom (if applicable)

Learner Handbook

The Learner Handbook forms part of the QA system and is published on the school website and on the LMS. It is designed to make clear and comprehensive information for learners available in an easily accessible manner. It is updated and reissued annually.

Resources and Supports Available

- Comfortable, well-maintained, fit-for-purpose facilities which are conducive to learning with appropriate, high-quality equipment and resources.
- Induction on their first day of class where learners are made aware of key information regarding coursework, learner supports, assessment dates, and policies.
- Reasonable accommodation and compassionate consideration.
- Pastoral care is provided by teachers/tutors and other members of school staff as appropriate.
- Assistance and information is provided on potential career pathways, progression routes and third level institutes.
- Qualifying learners under the Fund for Students with Disabilities Third Level Access Measure can avail of: PA, Additional Tuition, ICT Equipment, Sign Language Interpreter, Transport.

Reasonable Accommodation

The school tries to identify the diverse needs of learners when they apply for a place but also encourage learners to approach their teacher/tutor to highlight a specific need or if they need extra support. Each request is considered on a case-by-case basis. While the school makes every effort to accommodate special needs and non-standard learners, it can only respond to requests that are reasonable and practicable, and applicants must meet minimum entry requirements for the programme.

These are examples of situations which may qualify for support:

- Limited visibility
- Hearing loss
- Learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia
- Mobility/motor impairment
- Speech impairment
- Chronic health condition
- Mental health issues*

The list is not exhaustive, and the school does its best to accommodate all learners presenting with any other support need as far as is practicable.

The following are examples of supports the school can put in place:

- Additional time for exams or assessment
- Provision of additional equipment

*The school uses the following resources to guide it in supporting learners with mental health issues:

- https://www.fess.ie/images/stories/Learner_Well_being/WellbeingInTheFETEnvironment.pdf
- Aontas FET Learners and Mental Health in Ireland: Identifying Supports 2023.
https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTASResearch/Mental%20health%20report_FINAL.pdf

Examples of Reasonable Accommodation Provided

- Physical modifications to the classroom such as seating arrangements or easier access
- Provision of learning materials in accessible format
- Allowing additional time for assessment
- Flexible attendance requirements

Compassionate Consideration

In order to ensure fairness in assessment, learners may apply for compassionate consideration if there are extenuating circumstances. Examples of circumstances where a learner may apply for compassionate consideration are:

- Serious accident or serious illness (self or close family member)
- Death of a family member or close friend
- Domestic crisis

This is not an exhaustive list, and the school considers each application on its own merits. This could include deferring an assessment activity or availing of an extension to an assessment deadline and supporting evidence/documentation must be provided. If a learner is granted compassionate consideration, the school must ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged or gain significant advantage when compared with other learners as a result.

Learner Complaints

Policy

The school is committed to maintaining a positive learning environment for all, to open communication between staff, teachers/tutors and learners on issues of concern, and to responding promptly when a grievance or complaint is raised by a learner. The school aims to resolve concerns and complaints promptly, amicably, fairly and confidentially, and informally if at all possible. The

Complaints Procedure is designed to ensure the necessary degree of independence from any earlier decision making. The school advises learners that their teacher/tutor is the first contact point for discussion of any queries or concerns. It is recognised, however, that from time-to-time issues may arise which need more formal arrangements to ensure a satisfactory and effective solution. In such cases, the school encourages the learner to use the formal complaints procedures. The school does not accept anonymous complaints and deals with complaints in strict confidence with access to details on a needs-only basis.

Learner Complaints Procedure

The school has a step-by-step procedure for dealing with learner complaints in a fair, timely and constructive manner. The Quality Officer deals with learner complaints and maintains the **Complaints Register**.

Steps for Implementation

- The school lets learners know about the complaints process, their right to complain and how to complain at Induction.
- The school advises learners to raise an issue with their teacher/tutor in the first instance unless the issue relates to the teacher/tutor in which case, they should contact the Quality Officer.
- The teacher/tutor or Quality Officer discusses the issue with them and attempts to resolve it informally.
- The teacher/tutor records the details if they regard the complaint as significant and forwards the details to the Quality Officer who records them on the learner record.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or if the learner feels that they cannot make an informal complaint, they can submit details of the complaint in writing, with any supporting documents, to the Quality Officer.
- The learner is asked to submit details within 5 working days, or as soon as possible, after the issue arising.
- The Quality Officer records details on the **Complaints Register** and on the learner record and retains records of correspondence and details of the resolution reached.
- The Quality Officer acknowledges the complaint when they receive it, investigates it and decides on a course of action and responds in writing to the learner within twenty working days.
- The school aims to close off complaints within twenty days of receiving them if possible. If the investigation takes longer; the Quality Officer contacts the complainant and explains the delay.
- If the Quality Officer considers the complaint to be serious (e.g. a safeguarding issue) they escalate it to the Principal who investigates, decides on a course of action and responds within twenty working days.
- If the learner is not satisfied with the decision, they can appeal it by submitting a request in writing to the Chair of the Board of Management within ten working days.
- In the case of an appeal, the Chair of the Board of Management appoints an independent person who has no connection with any party involved to review the complaint, the investigation and the decision.

- The Independent Reviewer submits a report to the Board of Management which makes a decision.
- The Chair of the Board of Management notifies the complainant of the decision in writing. This decision is final.
- The **Complaints Register** is reviewed as part of our quality reviews.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Learner Supports

The Quality Officer coordinates learner supports and monitors their effectiveness, reviews and analyses the responses with the Quality Committee and reports in aggregate form to the Quality Oversight Board. The school surveys learners regularly for their overall impression of learning resources and learner supports. There are questions on the **Learner and Teacher/Tutor Feedback Forms** about supports and communications. The Quality Officer takes into account the feedback of all learners including learners who have availed of reasonable accommodation or compassionate consideration. The school also encourages learners to give one-to-one feedback.

Chapter 8 Information and Data Management

Aligned to Core Guideline 8 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy Statement

It is the school's policy to collect and use data responsibly and securely and to maximise the use of this data to achieve its aims and objectives and to protect the interests of learners and other stakeholders. The school regards the data it generates and holds as an important resource and a key asset that it needs to manage and secure effectively. Reliable information and verifiable data supports and facilitates informed decision-making and helps to identify what the school is doing well and where there are gaps. Staff who are responsible for data collection, storage, security, maintenance, dissemination, and quality must do so in a systematic, planned, and secure way. Maintaining the quality of data is crucial so that decision-makers know that their decisions are based on robust, accurate and complete data. The school is committed to meeting its legal and regulatory requirements in relation to the protection of data. The school is also committed to providing to QQI such information as QQI may require for the purposes of the performance of its functions, including information in respect of completion rates.

Responsibilities

- The BOARD OF MANAGMENT has delegated responsibility to the Principal for the management, maintenance and security of data and information.
- The Quality Officer is responsible for ensuring that the information and data presented to the Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board is robust, verifiable and timely.
- The Quality Officer is responsible for safeguarding and securing personal or sensitive information relating to learners and/or teachers.

Learner Records

A Learner Record encompasses all records, files, documents, and other materials that are directly related to a learner. Data included on the Learner Record include:

- Name
- Home Address
- Email
- Contact telephone number/s
- PPSN (removed/destroyed when successfully registered on the QBS)
- Attendance records
- Teaches/Tutors

- Education details
- Employment details
- Social welfare recipient (Y/N)
- Details of reasonable accommodation provided (if any)
- RPL (Y/N).
- Assessment results
- Complaints/Appeals
- Disciplinary issues
- Fees paid
- Date of results notification
- Date of certification
- Date of issue of award certificate

The Quality Officer manages the learner record system and adds, edits and removes content as required. Data on the learner record allows the school to track the learner journey from application to certification. Access to the system is restricted and through a login with a password. The Quality Officer controls access to the learner record system and the Quality Officer is the only staff member who is authorised to change learner records.

Information and Data Provided to Governance Units

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The school defines a KPI as a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively an objective is being met. All the data collected during monitoring and review provides important information about the success of a programme, learner progress, areas requiring improvement and opportunities for further development.

- Number of enquires
- Number of applications and trends over three years
- Learner numbers per programme, trends over 1 year, 3 years, 5 years
- Conversation rate from enquiry to application
- Number of dropouts/early exits
- Number of completions
- Number certified
- Number of deferrals
- Comparison of award outcomes and other programme data with those of other schools in the Network and using QQI Infographics
- Grade distribution over time
- Number of RPL applications
- Number of 'non-standard' applications
- Number of applications for reasonable accommodation for assessment/number granted
- Attendance rates
- Progression rates
- Number of CPD events – internal and external

- Learner rating of teacher/tutor and staff performance
- Teacher/tutor and learner ratings of the standards of programme resources and learner supports
- Number and level of seriousness of complaints
- Number of accidents/incidents and appeals.

Schedule of Reports Presented to Governance Units

Governance Units

1. Board of Management
2. Quality Oversight Board
3. Results Approval Panel

Report Title	To:/From	Frequency	Presented by
Risk/Complaints/Appeals/Accidents and Incidents Registers	To the Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board	At each meeting	Quality Officer
Self-Evaluation Reports/Programme Reviews	To the Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board	As they happen	Quality Officer
New Programme Proposals	To Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board	As they arise	Quality Officer
Applications for Validation	To Board of Management	As they arise prior to submission QQI	Quality Officer
Results Approval Panel (RAP) reports	To Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board	Following each RAP meeting	Quality Officer
External monitoring reports	To Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board	As they arise	Quality Officer
External Authentication reports	To Results Approval Panel (RAP)	Each certification period	External Authenticator
Internal Verification reports	To Results Approval Panel (RAP)	Each certification period	Internal Verifier
Quality Oversight Board Reports	To Board of Management	Following each meeting	Quality Officer
School Progress Report	To Quality Oversight Board	Prior to each meeting	School rep on the Quality Oversight Board
Completion rates	To QQI	On request	Quality Officer

Data Protection

Legislation defines personal data as "any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person". All staff are briefed on the implications of data protection legislation and best practice and their role in ensuring that all personal data is protected at Induction. Teachers/tutors are reminded that assessment evidence is regarded as personal data as a person is capable of identification either directly by name or indirectly by identification number from an assignment and an exam script.

The school protects data related to:

- Current and past learners
- Members of governance units
- Staff and job applicants
- Teachers and tutors
- Contractors and consultants
- Workplace Supervisors

The school uses, collects, stores, secures and destroys personal data in compliance with statutory obligations and has processes in place to ensure the accuracy, security, and integrity of any personal data it processes. The school provides privacy notices to those whose personal data they process and advises them of the following at the point of collection:

- what data they collect;
- why they collect it;
- what they use it for.
- who they will share the data with and for what purposes;
- their rights as the data owner;
- how the school protects their personal data;
- how long the school retains it.

The role of ACCS/JMB FESU in Data Retention

Data retention refers to the continued storage of personal data for compliance or operational reasons. Data protection legislation does not specify time limits for retention. The general principle is that, even if personal data is collected fairly and lawfully, it cannot be kept longer than required to fulfil the purposes for which it was collected. FESU is required to know what data it holds, why it holds it, and how it will be dealt with when it (FESU) no longer has an appropriate use for it (deleted, erased or anonymised). The term 'personal data' means any information concerning or relating to a living person who is either identified or identifiable. An individual could be identified, directly or indirectly, by name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier (such as an IP address) or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that individual. Most of the information submitted by members of the Network to FESU will not meet the definition of personal data – it will be statistical data presented in aggregate form. FESU is careful to ensure that it keeps the personal data it collects and retains in relation to the operation of the Network to a minimum.

FESU

- Adheres to the ACCS Data Protection Policy
- identifies the types of data that it will retain, as well as the sources of that data (primarily data submitted by members of the Network and data related to the panel of External Authenticators and Evaluators);
- determines how long it will retain the data and how it will dispose of it once it is no longer needed. FESU has decided to retain the personal data submitted for three years unless it still has an appropriate use for it, and then securely dispose of it by either confidential shredding (hard copy) or permanent deletion of electronic records;
- ensures that data pertaining to the Network and its operation is stored securely and that privacy considerations are taken into account;
 - Access to the data is limited to authorised personnel only
- determines how the data is to be stored securely while it retains it;
 - FESU uses secure cloud storage
- conducts regular audits to ensure that all the data it holds, including data related to the Network, is being retained and disposed of in accordance with its data retention schedule and the ACCS Data Protection Policy.

Data Protection in the Schools

- The ACCS/JMB provides a Data Retention and Destruction Schedule template to the schools in the Network. Each school populates this schedule independently but in line with the requirements of the agreed QA system. The school operates in line with its own data protection procedures. It limits the data it collects to that which is necessary and keeps it for the minimum time required and then securely destroys it.
- Assessment evidence is classified as personal data and is maintained accordingly. Assessment records include PPS numbers and sensitive data submitted to support applications for reasonable accommodation for assessment. The school retains assessment evidence and associated documentation until the appeals period has elapsed and then securely destroys it in line with the school's data retention and destruction schedule. If the school makes arrangements to facilitate the learners to collect the assessment evidence after the appeals period has lapsed, it give the learners a deadline by which the assessment evidence must be collected. If any learner has not collected the evidence by that date, it is then securely destroyed.
- When learners are registered on the QBS and invalid entries resolved, the Quality Officer securely destroys any hardcopy application forms or deletes electronic forms which contain PPS numbers and dates of birth.
- All computers are password protected and maintained in securely locked offices. Hard copy records are stored in secure locked presses.

Backups and Disaster Recovery

The school's IT systems are managed by an external IT support service provider. The security and retention of learner data is paramount, and back-up policies and data processing agreements are in place. The school operates according to its own back-up and disaster recovery policy.

Securing Personal Data – Teachers/tutors

Teachers/tutors do not use their own laptops or mobile phones to communicate with learners outside of the classroom. If a learner needs support outside of the classroom, they are advised to contact the Quality Officer.

Chapter 9 Public Information and Communication

Aligned to Core Guideline 9 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy Statement

QQI defines public Information as *the information that providers communicate and publish about their activities, including their education and training programmes; research and related services; about the provider and their quality assurance policies and procedures; and about evaluation and findings from quality assurance evaluations.*

Principles of Effective Communication

- Effective communication builds trust and drives engagement.
- Effective communication focuses on listening.
- Effective communication is timely and responsive.
- Effective communications are objective, up to date, easily accessible and designed with the audience in mind.

The school ensures that the information it publishes is designed to enhance its communication links with interested parties. It approves all information before publishing it. Information about the programmes, the range of supports available to learners, and quality assurance is communicated mainly through the school's website. Information for prospective learners is also published in brochures/flyers which are distributed widely. The school is committed to providing information to staff, teachers/tutors, learners, QQI and other stakeholders, and to seeking feedback from them about its programmes as appropriate. The school aims to ensure that communications are of a high standard and that the information it publishes in any format about programmes is compliant with the terms of Section 67 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 which requires provider institutions to specify:

- Details of the award
- Name of the awarding body
- Title of the award
- Whether the award is recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications
- Level of recognition
- Whether the award is a Major, Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental
- If completion of a programme does not entitle the learner to an award
- Statement of the procedures for access, transfer and progression which apply to the programme
- Arrangements for protection of enrolled learners (if applicable)

As a provider recognised by QQI, the school complies with QQI's requirements regarding the provision of QQI information. The school understands that if it provides enrolled learners with information which is false or misleading in any material respect, it is committing an offence. It ensures that references to QQI and the NFQ that it publishes are correct and accurate and that it uses the current versions of the NFQ graphic and the QQI award brand. As part of its programme review process, it reviews the information published about the school on the Irish Register of Qualifications and contacts QQI with regard to any changes or errors. The Quality Officer is the main point of contact with QQI and is responsible for distributing communications from QQI to colleagues and governance units.

Responsibilities

- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of quality of the programme and quality assurance information published.
- The Quality Officer approves programme and quality assurance information before it is published.

Who the Schools Communicate with

- QQI
- Department of Further and Higher Education Research Innovation and Science
- SOLAS
- Department of Education
- Members of the Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board
- Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
- Contractors and suppliers
- Prospective Learners
- Learners
- Graduates
- Local community
- Employers
- Workplace supervisors

Communications Media

- Brochures/prospectus/flyers
- The school website
- Social media
- Entries in directories, e.g. www.nightcourses.ie
- Texting and e-Mail
- Written documentation
- Advertisements

The website is the main source of information about programmes, learner supports, QQI and the NFQ. Visitors to the website can view the schedule of training and be guided through the steps for applying for a place on a programme, with signposting to support and guidance from staff as required.

Information for Prospective Learners

The school provides pre-entry information about the entry requirements, content, assessment and demands of the programme and supports on the website, to enable applicants to make an informed choice and brochures/flyers and the prospectus (if any) which can be downloaded from the website. These include the following information:

- Whether or not the programme leads to an award on the NFQ/the type of award and awarding body.
- The full name of the programme and the award, QQI Code and NFQ Level.
- Learner Supports.
- Entry Requirements.
- RPL.
- Learning outcomes.
- Progression routes/job opportunities.
- Work experience requirements (if any).
- Start and finish dates and outline of the timetable.
- Fees, grants, fee waivers.
- Terms and Conditions.
- How to enrol.

Publication Of Quality Assurance Documents And Evaluation Reports

The Board of Management is committed to the publication of the school's QA manual and key findings from QA evaluation reports in an easily accessible format and location on the school's website as soon as is practicable after the evaluation event and in line with QQI requirements and after they have been approved for publication by the Board.

The school publishes:

- The QA Manual.
- Certificates of Validation.
- Self-evaluation reports.

Chapter 10 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Aligned to Core Guideline 11 of the QQI Core QA Guidelines

Policy

The school continually monitors and evaluates the programmes, the quality of their FET provision and the learning and teaching environment in order to ensure high quality programmes and to identify opportunities for development and improvement. Ongoing monitoring and regular review and evaluation is essential to ensure that the school is meeting the requirements of learners, staff, teachers/tutors, QQI and other stakeholders and to facilitate the regular updating and refreshing of programmes.

Review and self-evaluation differ in frequency and scale. Programme review is on-going and typically focuses on specific indicators. Formal self-evaluation has a broad, systemic focus and is conducted at specified intervals. It focuses on the quality of, or impact on, the learners' experience, achievements, contributions and findings from the many stakeholders engaging in the quality system. To ensure effective and thorough self-evaluation the school takes the views of all stakeholders; learners, graduates, staff, teachers/tutors, employers, QQI, External Authenticators and governance units into account. The school regards the selection of a suitable External Evaluator who is competent to make a positive contribution to the process and to future plans for the programme as being key to the success of a self-evaluation exercise. The outputs of review and evaluation processes are reported on in aggregate form to the Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board and used to implement change and improvement, to identify best practice and to stay abreast of developments that impact on programmes.

Responsibilities

- The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes and reviews reports.
- The Quality Officer is responsible for coordinating self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes with the Quality Committee and reporting on the outcomes to the Board of Management and Quality Oversight Board.

Evaluation Method	Who?	Frequency	What do we review?
Analysis of learner feedback	Teacher/tutor	Following each programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner Feedback Forms • One-to-one feedback provided by learners

Analysis of Class Rep feedback	Teacher/tutor	Following each programme	<i>Class Rep Feedback Form</i>
Analysis of teacher/tutor feedback	Quality Officer	Following each programme	<i>Teacher/Tutor Evaluation Forms</i>
Analysis of complaints	Quality Officer	Quarterly	<i>Complaints Register</i>
Analysis of risk	Quality Officer	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review any changes to documented risks. ● Add details of new risks
Learner Attendance data	Quality Officer	Ongoing	<i>Attendance Records</i> submitted by the teachers/tutors
Learners drop-out/early exit data	Quality Officer	Quarterly	<i>Attendance Records</i>
Analysis of assessment results	Results Approval Panel	At each RAP meeting	<i>Internal Verification</i> and <i>External Authentication Reports</i>
Adequacy of facilities and resources	Quality Officer	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback from teachers/tutors and learners ● Personal observations

Schedule of Monitoring Activities

Learner Feedback

The school encourages learners to complete early satisfaction and end-of-course feedback forms, to give informal feedback through meetings/contact with teachers/tutors or any member staff, or through their class rep. The ***Learner Feedback Form*** and ***Class Rep Feedback Form*** are designed to elicit honest feedback about the programme content, teachers/tutors, learner supports, teaching and learning methodologies, the quality of the resources and facilities, and any other matters relevant to the learner and ask for both qualitative and quantitative feedback. The teacher/tutor emphasises to the learners the benefits of providing feedback at Induction and during the programme. The school surveys class reps at the end of their 'term-of-office' to get their feedback and views. The school also encourages learners to give feedback via email, phone or at face-to-face meetings. Occasionally the school uses structured group discussions/focus group meetings, mainly as part of its self-evaluations.

Teacher/Tutor Feedback

Collecting, analysing and acting on teacher/tutor feedback is an essential element of monitoring. All teachers/tutors must submit a completed ***Teacher/Tutor Evaluation Form*** at the end of each programme. This allows issues to be identified and responded to appropriately, as well as further supports to be put into place either for the teacher/tutor or the learners, if needed.

Reviewing and Maintaining Programmes

All those who are directly involved in all aspects of the programme (the Programme Team) review and critically re-appraise programmes every two years and make modifications within the bounds of validation and in accordance with Section 8 of QQI's Validation Policy 2017. Programme reviews are positive and forward looking, and the school uses the review data to inform the development and enhancement of its programmes.

The Quality Officer is responsible for convening Programme Team meetings and managing the documentation and reporting to the Quality Committee.

Programme Review Procedure

- The Quality Officer plans the review with the Programme Team and agrees a timeline
- The Programme Leader produces a draft programme report based on the agreed headings in the **Programme Review Report Form**.
- The Programme Team meet to discuss the findings/recommendations in the draft programme report and agree a **Quality Improvement Plan**.
- The Quality Officer presents the draft programme report/improvement plan to the Quality Committee for review, comment and feedback.
- The **Quality Improvement Plan** sets out a schedule of actions to be undertaken and identifies who is responsible for the actions and follow-up. This plan is regarded as living document which needs to be regularly reviewed, referenced, edited and updated.
- The Programme Leader updates the programme content after the review and highlights the changes to the teachers/tutors at Programme Team meetings.
- The Quality Officer monitors the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan.
- The Quality Officer reports on progress on implementation at Programme Team meetings and highlights any gaps.
- The Quality Officer reports programme review data in aggregate form to the Quality Oversight Board.

What does the Programme Team review?

- Data on learner enrolments, retention, completion and progression.
- The curriculum content/programme materials and resources – are they up to date/reflect best practice/in line with current thinking and regulation?
- The assessment strategy.
- Adequacy of learner materials and supports, premises, equipment and facilities.
- Programme staffing, management, administration.
- Data from ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- Grade analysis and benchmarking.
- Authentication reports.
- Views of employers and other stakeholders, e.g. work placement supervisors.
- Overall learning experience and success of the programme.
- Number of graduates to progress to higher level programmes/employment.

Monitoring of Quality of Work Placements

The Work Experience teacher/tutor is responsible for monitoring the quality of work placements and reporting on it to the Quality Officer. The teacher/tutor collates and analyses the following:

- Feedback from the learners on placement, the Workplace Supervisors and the External Authenticator.
- Quality of the **Work Experience Journals**.
- Quality and relevance of the work the learner was given to do on placement.
- Assessment results for the work experience module.

Self-Evaluation

Policy

“The self-evaluation by a provider of its programmes and services is a fundamental part of its quality assurance system. It is a way of developing the programme through constructive questioning leading to positive recommendations and improvement planning. It should be viewed as a process primarily for the benefit of the programme, its current and future learners and the staff working on it.” QQI

The self-evaluation of a programme or a related group of programmes is a collaborative, reflective process of internal review and external evaluation undertaken every five years in line with revalidation. The process is enhancement-based and forward looking and focuses on identifying improvements to programmes, policies, structures and processes. It is a wide-scale comprehensive review of all aspects of a programme and the quality assurance processes that underpins it. The school uses the data produced to inform the development and future planning for the programme if it decides to continue with the programme. The findings of self-evaluations are detailed in a **Self-Evaluation Report** (SER) which articulates the school’s vision and plans for the programme. The SER is submitted to QQI after it has been approved.

Aims of Self-Evaluation

- To provide the data to make an informed decision to retire or revalidate the programme and help to plan for the future of the programme.
- To give Programme Teams an opportunity to systematically look at how they deliver the programme, the quality of the programme and the QA processes that support provision.
- To examine how the programme is innovating and adapting to change and how it is competing in the market.
- To examine the governance and management of the programme.
- To identify the strengths and weaknesses of a programme and areas needing improvement.
- To develop a Quality Improvement Plan.
- To further embed a quality culture.
- To identify current gaps and priorities for improvement in the context of QQI statutory QA guidelines.

Process of Self-Evaluation

The process involves evaluation, reflection, review and reporting on the quality and effectiveness of a programme or programmes using quality assurance data collated during the 5-year period being addressed by the evaluation. The school groups modules leading to a major or special purpose award, where there is significant overlap in terms of content and focus, for evaluation.

The Quality Committee agrees a Terms of Reference, the scope of the evaluation, and a Programme Evaluation Team comprising the lead teacher/tutor, the Quality Officer, a learner/recent graduate of the programme (or not more than two years), an employer/industry representative if relevant.

The Quality Officer provides administrative support to the team and ensures that all members understand their role and the purpose of the self-evaluation.

The BOARD OF MANAGMENT ensures that the resources in terms of time, expertise (internal and external), and organisational commitment are in place.

Selection and Appointment of the External Evaluator

The External Evaluator must be:

- Independent of the school and the programme
- Approved by the Quality Oversight Board
- Able to provide objective feedback
- Experienced in programme evaluation
- Have broad subject matter expertise and a recognised qualification
- Capable of comparing the quality of programme(s) being evaluated with that of similar programmes
- Competent to contribute to the development and enhancement of the programme(s) being evaluated
- Be familiar with qualifications frameworks and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in particular

The Quality Officer sources a suitable External Evaluator and obtains CVs, details of professional qualifications and relevant experience to confirm the suitability of the appointment. The school uses peer reviews from within the QA Network whenever possible. The appointment is approved by the Quality Oversight Board. The External Evaluator is selected based on their match to the stated selection criteria. Following approval of the appointment, the Quality Officer confirms details of the arrangements with the External Evaluator. The External Evaluator consults with current and past learners as part of the external evaluation process.

What is considered/evaluated

- The views of the Board of Management, the Quality Committee, current and past learners, teachers/tutors, employers/industry, Work Placement Supervisors (if applicable) and other stakeholders, all members of Programme Team and of an Independent Evaluator.
- Feedback from learners.

- Current and potential future demand for the programme.
- Similar programmes being offered by other providers.
- Financial viability of the programme.
- The relevance of the programme to the sector/learner profile it was designed for.
- A review and critical analysis of the QA system which facilitates the achievement of the programmes' aims and objectives.
- Programme strengths and weaknesses.
- Performance of learners including grade profiles and trends, progression and completion rates, retention, and withdrawal rates.
- Curriculum and assessment processes.
- Resources required to deliver the programme including human resources and the levels of training and assessment skills required.
- Suitability and appropriateness of the physical facilities and anticipated changing needs in the future.
- The success of the teaching, assessment, and learning strategy.
- Links with employers, industry, the business and wider community.
- Transfer and progression pathways.
- Findings from programme reviews.
- Findings of QQI monitoring reports (if any).
- Legislative/regulatory changes which impact on the programme.
- Changes in QQI requirements.
- Suitability and appropriateness of the IT resources and infrastructure which support the programme, e.g. the LMS.
- Minimum entry requirements and their appropriateness for the current context.

Outcomes of the Self-Evaluation Process

- The **Self-Evaluation Report** (SER) which includes the **External Evaluator's Report** and a programme **Quality Improvement Plan** based on the recommendations approved by the Quality Committee.
- Updates and modifications to the QA system/revised QA documentation.
- The SER is submitted to QQI following approval by the Board of Management.
- Relevant feedback is conveyed to teachers/tutors and other relevant stakeholders.

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference

Quality Oversight Board

Terms of Reference	Quality Oversight Board (QOB)	Approved by the ACCS and participating schools
Associated Policy	CG1 Governance and the Management of Quality	Approval Date:
Version Number and Date	V2 112023	Effective From:
Owner of the document	Director of FESU	Review Date: +1 year

Participating Schools

Coláiste Mhuire Ballygar
Glenamaddy Community School
The Donahies Community School
Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone
Cabinteely Community School

Purpose of the Quality Oversight Board

Maintain oversight of academic standards, quality of programmes and the implementation of the common QA system in the participating schools.

Membership and Tenure

Members serve for three years.

- External Chair (appointed by FESU)
- Director of FESU ex-officio
- The Quality Officer (or equivalent) from each participating school nominated by the school
- A learner/recent graduate
- Two teachers/tutors who are currently delivering FE programmes (appointed on a rotating basis from the five participating schools). At least one must be a fulltime member of teaching staff in a school.

Selection Criteria for External Chair

- Senior figure in further education and training.
- Understanding of the context the schools operate in.
- Independent of the schools.

- Experienced chair with knowledge of educational governance.

Role of the Chair

- Lead the Quality Oversight Board and guide its work and meetings.
- Agree the agenda in advance with the Director of FESU and ensure that it is circulated with relevant supplementary documentation to members as per the agreed schedule.
- To arrange for meetings of the QOB to be held regularly as per the agreed schedule and convene additional meetings if needed.
- To ensure an open and collaborative relationship with school management.
- To ensure full participation during meetings, that all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made and documented.
- Ensure that meeting minutes/reports are issued to members by FESU as per the agreed schedule.
- Ensure that reports are submitted to the Network Boards of Management as soon as possible following each meeting of the QOB.
- To represent the QOB at events if required, e.g. at programme validation panel meetings.
- Oversee reviews of the QOB's performance and report on it to the Network Boards of Management.

Procedure for Appointment of Teachers/Tutors to the QOB

Teachers/tutors are nominated by FESU and approved by the QOB for a two year term of office. There are two teacher/tutor members of the Board; at least one must be a fulltime member of teaching staff in the school.

FESU invites nominations from the schools. Those nominated must be currently delivering FE programmes in the school.

The Boards of Management of the schools of the teacher/tutor members must ensure that the teachers/tutors are in a position to attend the QOB meetings and to carry out any other duties associated with QOB membership.

Each school submits a completed **Teacher/Tutor Nomination Form** on school headed paper (template for the form supplied).

The teachers/tutors are inducted and briefed by the Chair of the QOB and FESU before they take up membership.

Teachers/tutors are not to be seen as representing their own schools on the Board. Their role is to focus on teaching and learning and issues that relate to teachers/tutors generally as well as participating in all Board discussions.

Teacher/tutor members are appointed in the following (alphabetical) order:

Year 1	Cabinteely Community School CCS	Coláiste Mhuire Ballygar CMB	
Year 2	Cabinteely Community School	Coláiste Mhuire Ballygar	
Year 3	The Donahies Community School DCS	Glenamaddy Community School GCS	
Year 4	The Donahies Community School DCS	Glenamaddy Community School GCS	
Year 5	Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone JMS	Cabinteely Community School CCS	
Year 6	Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone JMS	Cabinteely Community School CCS	

Copy and complete this document on school's headed paper:

Nomination Form for Teacher/Tutor Member of the Quality Oversight Board (QOB) of the Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) QA Network

We nominate _____ for the role of membership of the Quality Oversight Board.

X understands what the role entails, has read the terms of reference and is committed to participating fully and constructively in the Board's activities.

The Board of Management has agreed that X will be facilitated in attending QOB meetings and in carrying out any other duties associated with QOB membership.

	Name	Signature	Date
Chair, Board of Management			
Principal			

Procedure for Appointment a Learner to the QOB

Learner are nominated by FESU and approved by the QOB for a two year term of office. There is one learner member of the QOB.

FESU invites the relevant school to nominate a learner. The learner nominated must be either a learner currently undertaking or have graduated not more than two years from an FE programme in the school.

The school must be confident that the learner they nominate has the confidence, competence and capacity to participate effectively as a Board member.

The Board of Management of the school of the learner must ensure that the learner is in a position to attend the QOB meetings and to carry out any other duties associated with QOB membership.

The school submits a completed **Learner Nomination Form** on school headed paper (template for the form supplied).

The learner is inducted and briefed by the Chair of the QOB and the Director of FESU before they take up their role and given support to ensure that they are able to make a meaningful contribution to the work of the Board.

Learners are nominated by the schools in the following order:

- The Donahies Community School DCS
- Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone JMS
- Glenamaddy Community School GCS
- Coláiste Mhuire Ballygar CMB
- Cabinteely Community School CCS

Copy and complete this document on school's headed paper:

Nomination Form for Learner Member of the Quality Oversight Board (QOB) of the Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) QA Network

We nominate _____ for the role of membership of the Quality Oversight Board.

- X understands what the role entails, has read the terms of reference and is committed to participating fully and constructively in the Board's activities.
- We understand that X is not representing this school on the Board. Their role is to be a learner voice with a focus on issues that relate to learner interests generally as well as participating in all Board discussions.
- The Board of Management will support X in attending QOB meetings and in carrying out any other duties associated with QOB membership.

	Name	Signature	Date
Chair, Board of Management			
Principal			

Responsibilities

- Act as a source of guidance , support and knowledge-sharing for the Network schools in relation to quality assurance.
- Arrange for the dissemination of information in relation to changes in QQI QA requirements and best practice in quality assurance.
- Support the schools in planning for improvement in quality and implementing these plans.
- Advise on training and CPD in relation to quality assurance.
- Review and comment on the schools' authentication and approval reports.
- Devise, on an annual basis, an outline structure and focus for **School Progress Reports**.

- Consider and give feedback on the **School Progress Reports** submitted by the schools to include reporting on the quality of assessment, the teaching and learning environment and learner supports.
- Approve the appointment of External Authenticators and External Evaluators.
- Maintain oversight of the quality of public information related to programmes and quality assurance.
- Maintain oversight of academic-related risk as reported by the schools.
- Consider programme proposals and programme validation/revalidation applications and make recommendations to the Network Boards of Management.
- Report to the Board of Management or QQI as appropriate on any substantive concerns about quality standards or the integrity of awards or assessment in the school.
- Stimulate the schools to improve their own QA systems and contribute to the quality of the other schools by knowledge and resources sharing.
- Approve changes to QA policies.

Meetings

The Quality Oversight Board meets quarterly. The frequency of meetings is regularly reviewed by the QOB, and additional meetings may be convened if they are needed.

- FESU:
 - Provides administrative support and maintains minutes, reports and all other documentation.
 - Issues an agenda and supporting documents agreed with the Chair at least 10 working days in advance of a meeting.
 - Prepares meeting notes and information.
 - Takes and writes up minutes/action plans and distributes them not more than 10 days following a meeting.
 - Prepares the report to go the Boards of Management which must be approved by the Chair.
- A quorum is at least 75% of members which must include the Chair.
- Issues for discussion are usually determined by consensus. If consensus is not possible, the issue is decided by a majority of the members present voting and, in the case of an equal division of votes, the Chair has the casting vote.
- The Chair may invite other stakeholders to join the meeting to discuss specific items.

Governance and Authority

These terms of reference are reviewed every two years by the QOB in line with the review of the QOB's performance.

Supporting Documents

- Meeting **Agenda**
- **School Progress Report** template with agreed headings

Report Schedule

Report/document	From/To	Frequency	Presented by
Quality Oversight Board Report	To the Board of Management of each school	After each meeting	Chair of the Quality Oversight Board
Results Approval Panel Report from each participating school	To the Quality Oversight Board	Annually at the September meeting	Quality Officer (or equivalent)
Report from each school	To the Quality Oversight Board	In advance of each meeting	Quality Officer (or equivalent)

Quality Oversight Board Meeting Agenda

<p>Voluntary Secondary/Community Comprehensive Sector (VSCCS) QA Network</p> <p>Quality Oversight Board Meeting</p> <p>Day/Date/Time/Duration:</p> <p>Location/link for online meeting:</p> <p>Members:</p> <p>In attendance:</p> <p><u>Agenda</u></p> <p>Standing Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome ● Apologies ● Declaration of any conflicts of interest of loyalty with anything on agenda ● Draft minutes of previous meeting for approval ● Matters arising (if not arising as a separate agenda item) ● School Progress Reports – issues arising ● Response from the Boards of Management to recommendations ● Agreed recommendations to go to Boards of Management
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- AOB
- Next meeting/s
- Meeting close

Other Agenda Items:

Name:

Date of Issue:

Supporting Papers Circulated with the Agenda:

Procedure for QOB Reporting to Boards of Management

A report with recommendations goes from the Quality Oversight Board to the Principals asap after each meeting of the Quality Oversight Board.

- All communications are with the Principals of the schools in their role as Secretary of the Board of Management.
- FESU asks the Principals for a schedule of Board of Management meetings at the beginning of the school year.
- FESU submits a schedule of Quality Oversight Board Meetings to the Principals at the beginning of the school year.
- The QOB asks the Principals to have reporting from the Quality Oversight Board as a standing item on the agenda for Board of Management meetings (there may not always be any business).
- Reporting from the Boards of Management is a standing item on the agenda for Quality Oversight Board meetings.
- The recommendations which the report to the Boards of Management is to contain are agreed at the QOB meeting by those present.
- FESU drafts the report, submits it to the Chair of the QOB who approves and signs it.
- Following approval and sign-off, FESU submits a copy of the report by email to the Principals asap the meeting but not more than ten working days following the QOB meeting.
- FESU asks the Principals to respond to the recommendations by a specific date, if possible. The lead time for responding will vary depending on when meetings of the Board of Management take place.
 - If FESU has not received a response within the timeframe, FESU contacts the Principal to remind them that the response is outstanding.
- FESU updates the Chair of the QOB before the QOB meeting and the Chair reports on the status of the recommendations at the QOB meeting.

Results Approval Panel

Terms of Reference	Results Approval Panel		
Associated Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CG1 Governance ● CG6 Assessment 		
Version No and Date	V1 012022	Owner	The Quality Officer
Adoption Date		Review Date	+2 years

Role

To maintain oversight of assessment processes and trends, to approve results, and make recommendations for corrective action to the Quality Oversight Board.

Membership and Tenure

The Board of Management appoints members. In doing so, the Board must ensure that there is no conflict of interest. Members must carry out their roles without bias and make their determinations based on the information provided to the Panel.

The Results Approval Panel is composed of a minimum of 5 people:

- An appropriately qualified independent chair
- Two teachers/tutors
- The Quality Officer
- The Internal Verifier

Occasional Members:

The Chair may invite others to attend for all or a particular section of the meeting, e.g. External Authenticator to present their report. Occasional members do not vote or participate in decision-making.

Responsibilities

- Consider the internal verification and external authentication reports.
- Confirm that appropriate assessment evidence and records are available.
- Comprehensively and thoroughly review assessment results.
- Confirm that the processes and results are fully quality assured and signed off by the Chair of the Panel before they are submitted to QQI for certification.
- Retain oversight of the systems in place to ensure security in assessment.
- Retain oversight of assessment-related risk.

- Ensure that appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment and authentication processes.
- Arrange for the notification of any suspected irregularities to the appropriate person/s and/or bodies.
- Review any recheck outcomes which are unsatisfactory to the learner.

Meetings

- The Chair convenes meetings as required in line with the school's annual certification plan.
- The Panel discuss each set of results including any concerns and suggests appropriate corrective or improvement actions, if required.
- The Panel considers the reports and approves the final results.
- The Quality Officer records decisions.
- The Chair arranges for the relevant personnel and learners to be informed of the approved results, ensuring that, where there has been a change to provisional results, that the learner is informed of the changed result and is made aware of the appeals process.
- The results are approved and signed off by the Chair on behalf of the fixed panel members who approved the results. This sign-off is the authorisation to submit the approved results to request certification.
- The **Results Approval Panel Report** is prepared by the Quality Officer ensuring that any non-conformances identified are recorded, signed by the Chair and maintained and kept on file.
- Any documentation provided to members during meetings is returned the Quality Officer at the end of the meeting.

Governance and Authority

The RAP reports to the Board of Management and the Quality Oversight Board.

Administrative Support

The Quality Officer provides administrative support and maintains all documentation.

Supporting Documents

- **RAP Report** Template
- [RAP Meeting Agenda \(appendix 4\)](#)

Report Schedule

Report/Document Title	To/From	Frequency	Presented by
RAP report	To Quality Committee and the Board of Management	Following each meeting	Quality Officer
External Authentication Report	To RAP	Each meeting	External Authenticator if present or the Internal Verifier
Internal Verification Report	To RAP	Each meeting	Internal Verifier

Quality Committee (School-Based)

Terms of Reference	Quality Committee	Approved by the Principal
Associated Policy	CG1 Governance and Management of Quality	Approval Date:
Version Number and Date		Effective From:
Owner	Quality Officer	Review Date:

Role

The role of the Quality Committee, if the schools put such a committee in place, is to support the Quality Officer in monitoring, reviewing and overseeing the implementation, enhancement and monitoring of the QA system in the school. It is up to each individual school to decide on if such a committee is needed. If not, duties will fall to the Quality Officer.

Membership

May vary from school to school but must include staff who have a central role in implementing the QA system within the school. Membership must be documented locally, and details submitted to the Quality Oversight Board.

Membership should include:

- The Quality Officer
- The Internal Verifier
- Colleagues who have a role in implementing the QA system in the school.

Responsibilities

- Regularly review QA policies, procedures, processes and practice.
- Determine and agree ways to enhance quality and further embed a quality ethos in the school.
- Consider any changes to the QA system recommended by the Quality Officer and the need for any new/revised procedures.
- Review monitoring and panel reports, programme evaluations and feedback from awarding bodies and make recommendations based on these.
- Advise the Quality Officer on the need for training in relation to assuring quality provision.
- Maintain oversight of programme design and approval, delivery, quality, and resources.
- Suggest new programmes for development.
- Review **Risk, Incident/Accident** and **Complaints Registers** with the Quality Officer.
- Consider feedback from learners, class reps, teachers/tutors, External Authenticators, External Evaluators, QQI and other significant stakeholders.

Meetings

- Meetings are convened and coordinated by the Quality Officer and the committee meets as often as necessary to execute its business.
- The Quality Officer provides administrative support and maintains committee documentation.

Appendix 2 Role Descriptions

Quality Officer

Responsibilities

- Coordinating the implementation of the QA system in the school.
- Update QA documents and ensure that only the most recent version of a document is being used.
- Work closely with the Principal and the Board of Management to promote and embed a quality culture in the FET provision in the school.
- Maintain academic-related **Risk Register**.
- Management of learner records and assessment and certification data.
- Ensuring the integrity and security of assessment.
- Coordinating learner supports and monitoring their effectiveness.
- Overall responsibility for assessment.
- Co-ordinating self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes.
- Represents the school on the Quality Oversight Board.
- Relationship and communications with QQI.
- Provide administrative support to the Results Approval Panel.
- Membership of the Quality Committee (if any).
 - Leads the school's Quality Committee (if any) and convenes meetings.
- Represent the school at external fora on quality assurance.
- Coordination of requests for extensions.
- Make arrangements for repeats and deferrals.
- Make arrangements for reasonable accommodation and compassionate consideration.
- Arranges secure storage of assessment materials and documentation.
- Issue results and award certificates to learners.
- Submit assessment results to QQI.
- Coordination of appeals.
- Point of contact for learners (after the teacher/tutor).
- Provides administrative support for the teachers/tutors.
- Deals with learner complaints and maintains the **Complaints Register**.
- Safeguarding and securing personal or sensitive information relating to learners and/or teachers/tutors.
- Maintenance and analysis of learner and attendance data.
- Co-ordinates application and registration of learners.
- Assists the Principal with the recruitment of part-time tutors.
- Implements the contingency plan for teacher/tutor absence.

Internal Verifier

Responsibilities

- Check that teachers/tutors have adhered to the school's assessment procedures and applied them consistently across assessment activities.
- Check that assessment results are calculated, transcribed and recorded correctly and accurately.
- Highlight any irregularities or deviations from the normal distribution of marks.
- Check that the **Master Folder** submitted by the teacher/tutor contains:
 - List of all learners alphabetically by surname with a breakdown of marks.
 - Module descriptor.
 - Assessment Briefs.
 - Marking Schemes.
 - Exam papers.
 - Sample solutions.
 - Video/Audio evidence (clearly labelled).

If the master folder is not complete, the Internal Verifier returns it to the teacher/tutor with notes.

- Take corrective action if results and/or assessment evidence is missing:
 - contacting the teacher/tutor,
 - rechecking assessments and/or evidence for mislaid items,
 - reviewing attendance registers and submission logs to ensure evidence was received.
- Complete and sign the **Internal Verification Report** including observations and recommendations.
 - Include details of any adaptations made/reasonable accommodation provided in the **Internal Verification Report**.
- Make the **Internal Verification Report** available to the External Authenticator in advance of authentication and to members of the Results Approval Panel in advance of the RAP meeting.
- Present the **Internal Verification Report** at the RAP meeting, highlighting any concerns or issues documented in the report, particularly issues which may need be addressed with corrective action.
- Check for evidence of feedback provided on the assessment scripts.

Appendix 3 Assessment Portfolio Checklist

Assessment Portfolio Checklist	
Name of Teacher:	Programme and Code:
Learner Group:	No. of Learners entered for Assessment:
Please ensure the following are included in assessment portfolio	Please tick or mark n/a
Copy of QQI award specification	
Copy of the Programme Descriptor	
Programme timetable and assessment plan	
Assessment briefs with submission deadline dates	
Examination paper/s and outline solutions (if applicable)	
Examination cover page/seating plan/invigilator report	
Marking scheme for each piece of assessment	
1. An assessment folder for each learner arranged in alphabetical order by learner surname containing all assessment evidence submitted by the learner with copy of the assessment brief signed by the learner stapled to the evidence. Each page of learner evidence initialled by the teacher/tutor using red ink.	
2. Each assessment folder should include the Individual Marking Sheet for the learner signed and dated by the teacher/tutor.	
3. All assessment evidence marked, marks totalled, percentage marks calculated, and grades awarded correctly (please double-check).	
4. Running Order Form of all audio-visual/audio evidence presented (if any) in a suitable format with a list of learners' names as they appear.	
5. Marks transferred correctly to the Summary Marking Sheet from the Individual Marking Sheets .	
6. Summary Marking Sheet/Provisional Results Sheet signed and dated by the teacher/tutor with learners' names entered alphabetically by surname.	
7. A signed statement with each piece of assessment indicating that the assessment evidence submitted is the learner's own work.	

8. Evidence of formative and summative feedback on assessment given to learners.	
9. Details of reasonable accommodation arrangements provided (if any).	
10. Details of late submissions/extensions granted.	
11. <i>Scheme of Work/Lesson Plans.</i>	
12. Completed <i>Teacher/Tutor Evaluation Form.</i>	
13. Completed <i>Learner Evaluation Forms.</i>	

***Please note:** Please be available to answer questions, if there are any, during Internal Verification and External Authentication. We will let you know the dates and times in advance.

Teacher/Tutor Signature: _____

Date of Submission of Assessment Portfolio: _____

Sign off by: _____

Appendix 4 Results Approval Panel Meeting Agenda

Results Approval Panel Meeting Agenda

In:

On:

At:

Agenda

- Apologies for absence
- Confirmation of quorum and membership/declaration of Interest
- Confidentiality. *Members are reminded that the proceedings of the panel are confidential, and that all documentation must be returned at close of meeting*
- Minutes of the previous RAP meeting and matters arising
- Report on progress of implementation of the agreed actions from previous RAP meeting
- Consideration of the **Internal Verification Report**
- Consideration of the **External Authentication Report**
- Identification of areas of potential vulnerability in assessment process
- Assessment trends
- Benchmarking assessment outcomes against previous years/ national data
- Corrective Action
- Confirmation of results
- Approval of final results/agree to submit final results to QQI and issue to learners
- AOB
- Next meeting

Appendix 5 Assessment Recheck and Appeals Procedure

Procedure Title	Assessment Recheck and Appeals
Associated Policy	CG6 Assessment of Learners
Version number & adoption date	V1 112022
Document Owner	Quality Officer
Review Date	+1 year

Purpose

To give learners the opportunity to discuss, check and/or appeal approved assessment results or process.

Scope

All learners

Definitions

Approved Result:

Approved results are results which have been through the internal verification and external authentication process and been approved for distribution to learners by the Results Approval Panel. An appeal must be based on an *approved* result.

Steps for Implementation

Recheck

- The Quality Officer advises learners that they can discuss their results with the assessor at a specific time and date and get feedback on how the assessment was marked/graded when they issue the approved results.
- Learners may request a recheck of their results after discussing the results with the assessor by filling in and submitting an **Assessment Recheck Request Form**. A recheck does not involve a review of the exam or assessment content or the learner's performance.
- On receipt of a request for a recheck, the Quality Officer checks that:
 - all elements of the assessment evidence were marked;
 - all marks were included in the final mark;

- there are no errors in the totting up of marks;
- the assessment weightings were correctly applied.
- This is double-checked by a colleague.
- The Quality Officer communicates the outcome of the recheck in writing to the learner within a week of a receipt of the application.
- If a result is changed, the Quality Officer amends the learner record on the QBS and informs QQI.
- Following the decision, a learner may request to view all information concerning their recheck application.
- If a learner is not happy with the result of the recheck, they have the right to request an appeal.

Appeal

- A learner who wishes to appeal must have substantive grounds for the appeal and must do so in writing, within 10 days of receiving assessment results.
- The learner must have discussed the results with the assessor before they appeal.
- The learner completes an ***Assessment Appeals Form*** and submits it with any supporting evidence to the Quality Officer.
- The learner must detail the grounds for the appeal and the element or elements of the assessment on which the appeal is based.
- The Quality Officer acknowledges receipt of the written appeal and forwards a copy of the documentation to the Chair of the Results Approval Panel, requesting the Chair to respond within an agreed timeframe.
- The Chair of the Results Approval Panel assigns an Appeals Examiner who had no previous involvement in the assessment to review the appeal and the assessment evidence.
- The Appeals Examiner checks the totting/recording to check for any errors. If an error is found, marks are changed.
- The Appeals Examiner examines and remarks the assessment evidence and decides to uphold or change the grade.
- The Appeals Examiner advises the Chair of the Results Approval Panel of their decision.
- If the appeal is successful, the Quality Officer amends the learner record on the QBS, informs QQI and lets the learner know the outcome in writing.
- The appeal result is final
- Following the decision, a learner may request to view all information concerning the appeal application.
- Appeal results from previous assessment periods are ratified at the next Results Approval Panel meeting.

Reference Documents

<i>QQI Quality Assuring Assessment - Guidelines for Providers (2013). Page 29</i>
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Supporting Documents

- ***Assessment Recheck Request Form***
- ***Assessment Appeals Form***

Appendix 6 Schools Agreement

VSCCS QA Network

Version 1: September 2022

School Agreement

- We agree to adopt the QA manual and collective approach when it is approved and to operate under the common QA system agreed with QQI for the members of the VSCCS QA Network.
- While doing so, we understand that the school is responsible for maintaining its own relationship as a recognised provider with QQI and for implementing the agreed QA system locally.
- We have read, understand and agree to the terms of reference for the Quality Oversight Board which has been established to maintain oversight of academic standards, quality of programmes and the implementation of the common QA system in the participating schools.
- We are committed to participating fully and proactively in the VSCCS QA Network and the operation of the Quality Oversight Board; ensuring the school is represented at the meetings and ensuring the school's representative on the Board is given the time and resources to participate fully and contribute effectively.
- We agree to implement the recommendations made by the Quality Oversight Board in relation to quality assurance and, if we decide not to implement a recommendation, to put forward our rationale to the QOB for not doing so.
- We understand that if the Quality Oversight Board has substantive concerns about quality standards or the integrity of awards or assessment in a participating school, the QOB is obliged to report the matter to that school's Board of Management or QQI as appropriate.

Signed

Chair, Board of Management	
School:	
Date:	

Appendix 7 Programme Design Team Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference	Programme Design Team		
Associated Policies	CG3 Programmes of Education and Training		
Version No and Date	V1 10 2023	Owner of the document	FESU
Adoption Date		Review Date	+2 years

Role

To design and develop curriculum, programme structures, training methodologies, materials, delivery and assessment methodologies to meet the needs of prospective learners and other stakeholders, and the requirements of QQI

Membership and Tenure

The Principal appoints a Programme Design Team based on recommendations made by the Quality Officer.

Membership

- Quality Officer
- Programme Leader (must be a subject matter expert)
- Other teachers/tutors
- Member with Instructional design and educational technology expertise if there are eLearning/online learning elements
- Member with expertise in programme and assessment design (may be the Programme Leader or a teacher/tutor)

The minimum number of members is three.

The term of office is determined by the process. The Programme Design Team ceases to function when the programme is validated.

Responsibilities

- Design a programme following the documented ***Programme Design and Approval Procedure*** taking the implications arising from the ***QQI Policies and Criteria for Validation of Programmes 2017*** into account.

- Set out a project plan including a target date for submitting the application for validation to QQI.
- Work within the budget and the timeframe agreed with the Principal
- Consult with external stakeholders including QQI.
- Consult with employers and/or other stakeholders and take their views on board in respect of programme outcomes and content.

Meetings

- The Quality Officer
- Convenes and coordinates meetings
 - Collates papers and data
 - Records outcomes, decisions and actions plans
 - Maintains records
- Decisions are made by consensus

Governance and Authority

- The Programme Design Team
- works under the direction of the Quality Committee/Quality Officer who maintains oversight of programme design in the school and is ultimately responsible to the Board of Management through the Principal.
 - The Quality Oversight Board maintains oversight of the quality of programme design in the Network.

Supporting Documents

- **Programme Design and Approval Procedure**
- **Programme Descriptor** Template
- Application templates provided by QQI

Report Schedule

Report/Document Title	To/From	Frequency	Presented by
Draft programme descriptor/self-evaluation report	To the Quality Oversight Board	As they arise	Quality Officer
Draft programme descriptor/self-evaluation report	To the Board of Management	As they arise	Quality Officer

Appendix 8 Procedure for the Design, Development and Approval of Programme

New Programme Approval

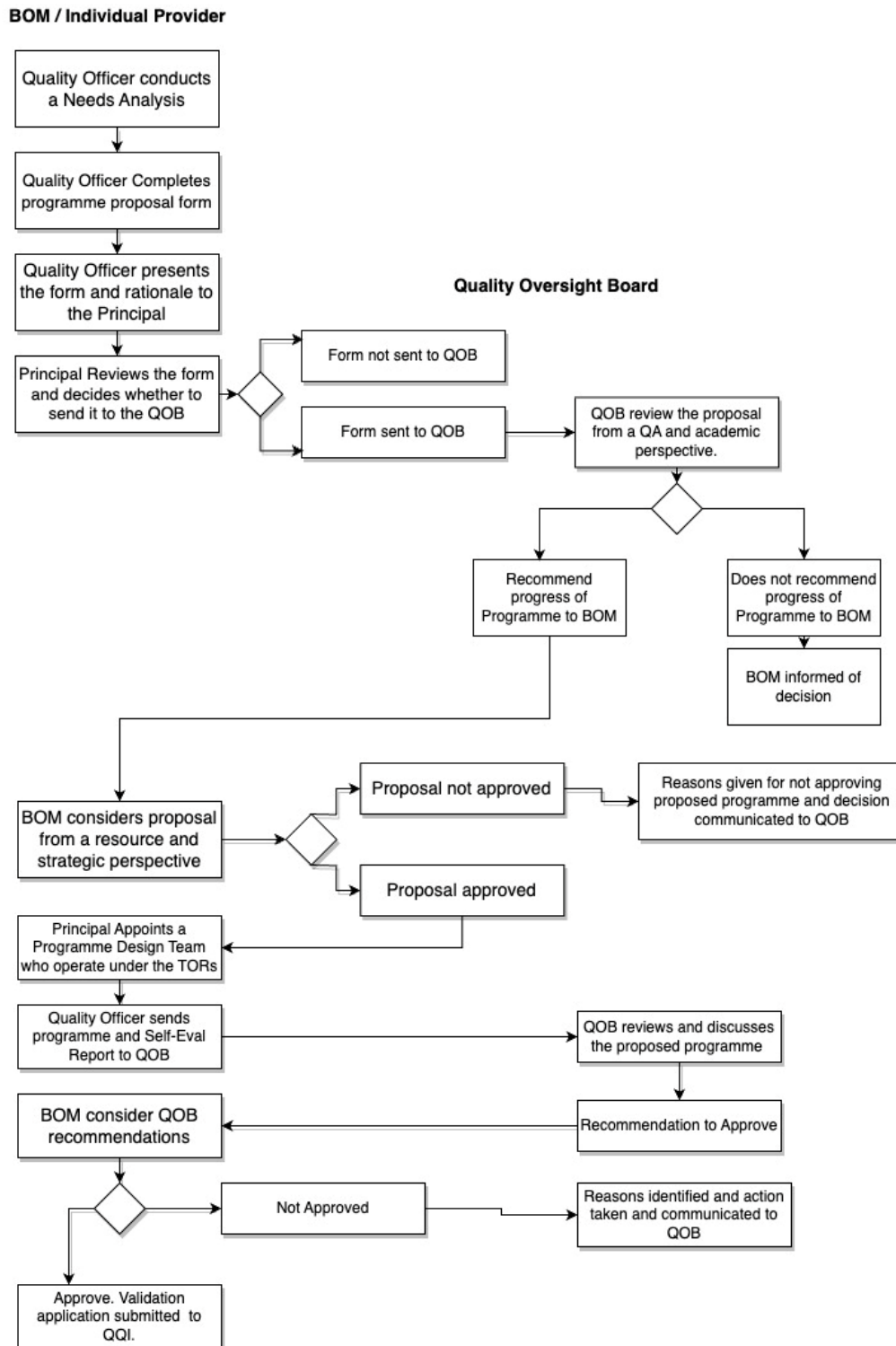


Figure 4 New Programme Development and Approval Procedure

Procedure for the Design, Development and Approval of a New Programme	
Associated Policy	CG 3. Programmes of Education and Training
Version number & adoption date	V1 October 2023
Document owner	FESU
Review Date	+1 year

Purpose

To set out a clear step-by-step a procedure for the design, development and approval of new programmes to be used by Programme Design Teams.

Scope

Applies to the development and design of all programmes leading to awards on the NFQ.

Steps for Implementation

1. The Quality Officer carries out a thorough needs identification exercise which evidences the need for the programme.
2. The Quality Officer:
 - a) completes a **Programme Proposal Form** which must include a strong rationale for the development of the programme and a cost/benefit analysis.
 - If the proposal is for a programme that is outside of the school's approved scope of provision, the proposal will/must make a case for extending the scope of provision and consider the implications of doing so.
 - b) presents it to the Principal who may decide (or not) to send the proposal forward to the Quality Oversight Board who considers it from an academic and quality assurance perspective.
3. The Quality Oversight Board discusses the proposal
4. If the Quality Oversight Board is satisfied that the school has the quality assurance and academic capacity to develop and deliver the programme to a high standard, it makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to progress the development of the programme.
 - a) If the Quality Oversight Board is not satisfied, it sets out clearly the reasons why and submits these to the Board of Management.
5. The Board of Management considers the proposal from a resource and strategic perspective and takes the Quality Oversight Board's recommendation into consideration.
6. The Board of Management checks that the proposed programme is in line with the mission and the school's strategic plan.
7. If the Board of Management does not approve the proposal, it details the reason for this decision. These are communicated to the QOB and the programme proposer.
8. If the Board of Management approves the proposal, it sets out a timescale and budget for development and approves the Quality Officer to lead the design and development process.
9. The Principal appoints a Programme Design Team based on recommendations made by

- the Quality Officer. The team operates under the documented terms of reference.
10. The Quality Officer ensures that the design aligns with the agreed QA policy and procedures and QQI requirements.
 11. The Programme Design Team:
 - a) Liaises with QQI.
 - b) Takes the implications arising from the **QQI Policies and Criteria for Validation of Programmes 2017** into account throughout the design process ensuring that the core criteria are addressed in the programme.
 - c) Sets out a project plan which includes a target date for submitting the application for validation to QQI.
 - d) Consults with employers and/or other stakeholders and takes their view on board in respect of programme outcomes and content.
 - e) Designs the curriculum using learning outcomes and aligns it with the relevant award standard (if applicable) or maps its learning outcomes to a relevant NFQ award type descriptor (for non-CAS programmes) which provides evidence that the programme can lead to a new QQI award.
 - f) Maps the learning activities to the learning outcomes and sets out clear instructions as to how the teacher/tutor and the learners must complete the programme activities.
 - g) Builds the processes for ongoing monitoring and periodic review into the programme.
 - h) Details the programme staffing profiles based on the needs of the programme and learner profile.
 - i) Carries out a risk assessment.
 - j) Designs an appropriate assessment strategy keeping the learner profile and the subject matter in mind; assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria.
 - k) Creates assessments that mitigate against cheating insofar as is possible with a focus on learners undertaking 'real world' tasks in meaningful contexts where possible.
 - l) Sets out the conditions for a supportive, positive and inclusive learning environment for learners and the Programme Team.
 - m) The design team considers inclusion and accessibility when designing curricula to make the programme more accessible and to reduce the need for future reasonable accommodations.
 - n) Seeks out and documents suitable transfer and progression opportunities for graduates. This may involve meetings and discussions with other FE and HE providers.
 - o) Produces a Programme Descriptor (using the template in the QA system) which houses all the information about the programme in one document.
 12. The Quality Officer gets the input of school's Careers Guidance Counsellor with regard to transfer and progression and the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELs) which gives learners the opportunity to use their QQI Level 5 or 6 major award to apply, through the CAO, for a place in the first year of a higher education programme (if the programme being designed leads to an award at Level 5 or 6).
 13. Consults with HEIs regarding transfer/progression opportunities. This is particularly important for programmes leading to non-CAS awards as they are not currently listed as part of the HELs.

14. Undertakes a self-evaluation of the programme and develops a self-evaluation report that must accompany the **Programme Descriptor** when applying for validation.
15. The Quality Officer presents the completed **Programme Descriptor** and the **Self-Evaluation Report** to the Quality Oversight Board, allowing members sufficient time before the meeting to consider the documents carefully.
16. The Quality Oversight Board discusses the **Programme Descriptor** at a meeting and may make some suggestions for amendments which are incorporated by the Programme Design Team if they are appropriate.
17. The Quality Oversight Board makes a recommendation to the Board of Management which is ultimately responsible for approving programmes.
18. The Board of Management then reviews the Programme Descriptor and may make some suggestions for amendments which are incorporated by the Programme Design Team if they are appropriate.
19. The Board of Management takes the QOB recommendation into consideration and makes a decision to approve or not.
20. When the programme is approved and signed off by the Chair of the Board of Management, it is submitted to QQI for validation.

Reference Documents

- **QQI Policies and Criteria for Validation of Programmes 2017**
- **Guide to Writing Learning Outcomes** (DIT)
- QQI Determinations for the Outline National Framework of Qualifications
- **A Conceptual Framework for UDL for Irish FET Sector** (Solas)
- **Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Write Effective Learning Objectives**
- **CEDEFOP Handbook on Writing Learning Outcomes**

Supporting Documents

- **Programme Proposal Form** Template
- **Programme Descriptor** Template

Appendix 9 Coordinating the Community of Practice Procedure

Community of Practice

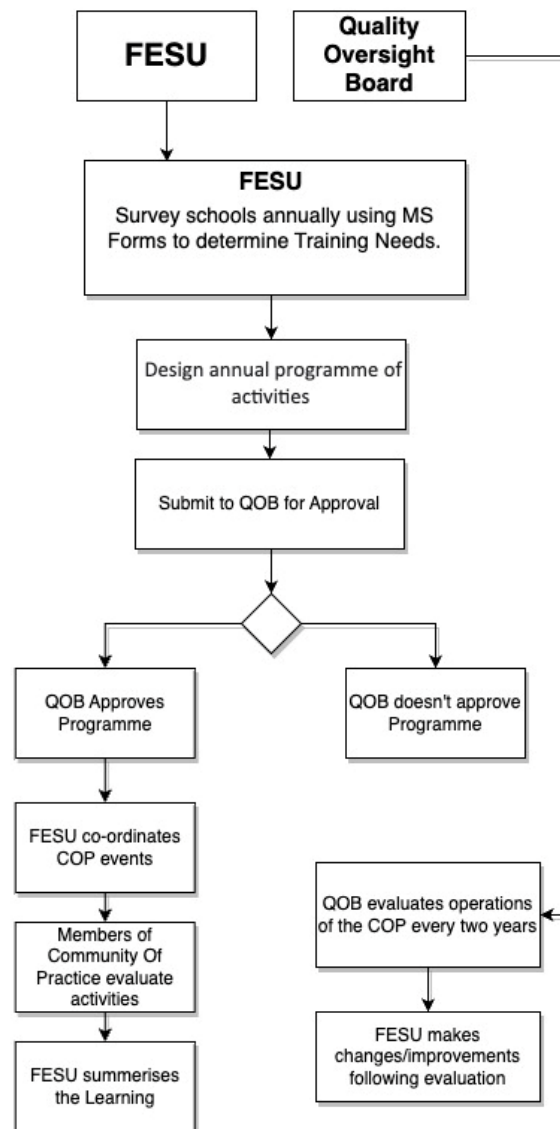


Figure 5 Community of Practice

Aims of the CoP

Procedure Title	Coordinating the Community of Practice (CoP)
Associated Policy	CG4
Version Number	V1
Document Owner	FESU
Adoption Date	October 2023
Review Date	+ 1 year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connect FET staff to share best practice ● Facilitate collaboration and problem-solving across the schools in the Network ● Knowledge creation and sharing ● Help members organise around purposeful actions, e.g. the development of shared resources 	

Purpose of the Procedure

To set out a step-by-step procedure for the coordination of the Community of Practice to ensure that it is effective and meets the needs of members.

Responsibilities

- FESU is responsible for ensuring that the mechanisms are in place to support the operation of the CoP – Teams, set-up meetings, provide support, monitor activities and discussion fora, upload resources, deal with member queries, etc.
- The Quality Officer in the school acts as the local contact for the CoP.
- Members are responsible for proactively engaging with the activities, sharing knowledge and views, maintaining confidentiality, responding to surveys, contributing on specific topics and evaluating the success of the CoP.

Membership

Membership of the Community of Practice is open to anyone who is involved in any aspect of further education provision in the schools forming the Network.

Definitions/Acronyms

A Community of Practice is a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly".

Steps for Implementation

- FESU surveys the Network schools annually in September using MS forms asking them what workshops and activities they would like the CoP to offer.
- As part of this survey, FESU also asks about the expertise and experience of each member and encourages members to provide their background, areas of interest, and relevant experience for sharing within the CoP.
- FESU analyses the feedback and presents the data from this survey to the QOB in aggregate form at the autumn meeting.
- The data is also discussed by members of the CoP within the schools.
- The QOB and/or FESU may also identify a training need.
- Based on the analysis of all the feedback, the QOB agrees a calendar of workshops and other events for the year, if possible.
- Most events will be online using Teams with the proviso that the CoP will have a F2F event at least once a year if feasible.
- Participants are asked to evaluate each event by completing a short survey on Microsoft Forms.
- FESU maintains notes from each event which are used when the success of the CoP is being evaluated (every two years).
- FESU reviews this feedback and acts on anything of note and presents an aggregate report to the QOB.
- Membership is maintained on Teams and members of the CoP have access to the CoP team.
- The CoP aims to meet four times per academic year for a workshop or other CPD activity.
- FESU convenes meetings, communicates with members, make resources available, moderates communications, manages the CoP Team.
- The QOB revisits the stated aims and goals of the CoP to evaluate if these are being achieved and, if they are not, to suggest ways to make the CoP more effective in meeting members' needs.

Reference Documents

Guidelines for Establishing Communities of Practice

Supporting Documents

- ***Workshop Evaluation Form***
- ***CoP Survey Form***

Appendix 10 Evaluating the Operation of the QOB and the QA Network

Procedure Title	Evaluating the Operation of the QOB and the QA Network
Associated Policy	CG1 Governance and the Management of Quality
Version Number	V1
Owner of the document	FESU
Adoption Date	October 2023
Review Date	+ 1 year

Purpose of the Procedure

To set out a step-by-step process for objectively examining the operation of the Quality Oversight Board and the QA Network. This process is undertaken every two years with an external expert who brings objectivity and expertise to the process.

Responsibilities

- The QOB is responsible for ensuring that the review is undertaken and that the findings are acted on.
- FESU coordinates the process.

Scope

The evaluation examines the effectiveness of the QOB in meeting its responsibilities, the quality of its relationship with the schools/Boards of Management, FESU and the success of the Community of Practice. The ultimate aim of the evaluation is to bring about improvement.

Definitions/Acronyms

--

Steps for Implementation

- The QOB appoints an External Evaluator who meets the selection criteria for the review.

- FESU, under the guidance of the Chair of the QOB, agrees the terms and conditions and the aim of the evaluation with the External Evaluator, confirms that there is no conflict of interest and maintains evidence of the suitability of the appointment.
- The External Evaluator facilitates QOB in evaluating its own performance.
- The External Evaluator then undertakes a detailed assessment and review of board papers over the previous two years:
 - Terms of reference of the QOB
 - Agendas
 - Minutes/action plans
 - Reports from the schools
 - Reports to and from the Boards of Management
 - FESU reports to the Board
- This list of documents is not exhaustive, and the External Evaluator may ask to access other documents that they consider to be within the scope of the review.
- The External Evaluator reviews the website and other information published by each school in relation to the agreed QA system and the programmes within the scope of the agreed QA system.
- The External Evaluator asks members of the QOB to complete a questionnaire and meets them to discuss the findings.
- FESU complies a report in relation to its responsibility of maintaining the QA system and the QA documents that make up the QA system.
- The External Evaluator asks the Boards of Management for feedback.
- The External Evaluator prepares an initial report identifying areas of success/strength and areas for improvement and submits it to FESU. Comments / statements must be based on evidence.
- FESU, the Chair of the QOB and the External Evaluator meet to view the report and discuss the findings.
- The External Evaluator prepares the final draft of the report within an agreed timeframe.
- When the final draft is agreed, a copy is circulated to members of the QOB in advance of a meeting giving members sufficient time to consider the findings.
- The External Evaluator attends a meeting of the QOB to discuss the findings and answer any queries that members may have in relation to the report.
- The QOB agrees the final report/**Quality Improvement Plan**.
- A copy is submitted to the Boards of Management.
- FESU monitors the implementation of the **Quality Improvement Plan** and reports to the QOB in relation to implementation.

KPIs – metrics used to track progress and assess the QOB’s performance

- Number of QOB meetings
- Level of attendance
- Member satisfaction/feedback from members
- Implementation of QOB recommendations by the schools
- Meeting efficiency, participation, and the quality of discussions

- The quality of the relationship with the Boards of Management/Principals and other key stakeholders
- The quality of the relationship with QQI
- Degree of implementation of the QA system by the schools
- Number of CoP events
- Attendance at CoP events
- Satisfaction with CoP events
- Maintenance of the QA documents
- Issues that required resolution

Selection Criteria for External Evaluator

- Be independent of the QA Network and the QOB
- Understand the operating context and how the QA Network model works
- Have a qualification of level 8 or higher on the NFQ
- Be in a position to be objective in their recommendations
- Has experience of evaluating academic governance in further or higher education institutions

Reference Documents

Supporting Documents

Report Template (to be designed by FESU)

Appendix 11 Reviewing the QA System

Procedure Title	Reviewing the QA System
Associated Policy	CG11
Version Number	V1
Document owner	FESU
Adoption Date	October 2023
Review Date	+ 1 year

Purpose of the Procedure

To set out a step-by-step process for objectively reviewing the effectiveness of the QA system and the QA documents which make up the system, identify opportunities for improvement and monitor adherence to QQI QA requirements. This review is undertaken every five years to ensure that the QA system:

- reflects experience and changing context;
- is effective in ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of programmes and supports;
- is accessible and easy to use;
- remains 'fresh,' and obsolete documents are removed;
- Meets QQI guidelines.

Responsibilities

- The members of the QA Network, i.e. the schools who own the QA system, are responsible for reviewing the operation of the QA system in their school as per this procedure and reporting the findings to the BOM and the QOB.
- The QOB, the custodian of the QA system, maintains oversight of the reviews and the implementation of the agreed improvements.
- FESU supports the schools in carrying out the reviews and ensures consistency of approach by the schools.

Scope

The QA system – policies, procedures, handbooks, documents and the evidence of implementation

Definitions/Acronyms

--

Steps for Implementation

- The Quality Officer may seek the help of FESU in identifying a suitable external QA Evaluator.
- The Quality Officer uses the templates and other documents designed by FESU as part of the suite of QA documents to ensure consistency of approach and methodology.
- The Quality Officer submits details of the suitability of the External QA Evaluator to the QOB for approval.
- If possible, the school contracts an External QA Evaluator that has been contracted by the other schools in the QA Network to support consistency across the Network, but this may not be feasible.
- The BOM appoints an External QA Evaluator for the review on the basis of recommendations from the Quality Officer.
- The Quality Officer agrees the terms and conditions with the External QA Evaluator, confirms that there is no conflict of interest and maintains evidence of the suitability of the appointment.
- The Quality Officer collates the data resulting from the school's ongoing monitoring of the QA system to feed into this review.
- The Quality Officer and the other members of the school's Review Team review and evaluate ongoing monitoring data and the following documents:
 - the **QA manual**;
 - QA procedures, support documents, forms and templates;
 - **Risk Register**;
 - terms of reference;
 - **Learner and Teacher/Tutor Handbooks**;
 - **Complaint, Incidents and Accidents and Appeals Registers**.
- All users of the system; learners, teachers/tutors, support staff, Board of Management are asked for input and suggestions for improvements to the existing system, e.g. draft copy of the revised **Teacher/Tutor Handbook** is sent to teachers/tutors for their input.
- The Quality Officer benchmarks the existing system against prevailing QQI requirements and updates it to take account of any changes in QQI guidelines.
- The Quality Officer compiles a draft report and submits it to the External Evaluator with copies of all QA documents. The evaluator may request additional information when they are assessing the draft report.
- The report and the documentation made available to the External Evaluator will help them to determine the degree of the school's compliance with QQI QA requirements and the degree to which it is implementing the agreed QA system.
- The External Evaluator meets the Quality Officer and the other members of the Review Team to discuss the draft report and to seek clarification and discuss areas of specific interest/concern.

- The External Evaluator produces an **External Evaluation Report** which comments on how successful the school is in implementing the QA system and provides advice and guidance on ways the school can enhance the operation of the system.
- The Quality Officer compiles a draft **Self-Evaluation Report** which incorporates the findings of the **External Evaluator's Report** and presents it to both the Board of Management and the QOB for consideration and approval. The Board of Management has final approval of the report.
- Following the review, the Quality Officer:
 - ensures that only current versions of documents are available to users;
 - archives/deletes outdated or obsolete documents;
 - makes minor changes/revisions to the QA system;
 - brings details of significant changes/revisions to the QOB for approval;
 - updates the revision history;
 - updates all QA documents available internally and publicly (on the website);
 - updates the **QA Document Register** (log of current versions of policies and procedures, handbooks, guidelines supporting documents, reference documents, forms and templates).
- When the **Self-Evaluation Report** and the recommendations have been approved, the Quality Officer organises a workshop/briefing to discuss the changes with the users of the system.
- The Quality Officer monitors the implementation of the agreed changes/recommendations and reports on implementation to the QOB.

Selection Criteria for External Evaluator

- Be independent of the schools
- Understand the operating context and scope of provision which the QA procedures are intended to support
- Have a qualification of level 8 or higher on the NFQ
- Be in a position to be objective in their recommendations
- Has experience of evaluating QA systems in further or higher education

Reference Documents

FESU will develop reference/support documents to support the schools with this process – guidelines, term of reference, templates, criteria against which evaluations are made, etc.

Supporting Documents

FESU will develop reference/support documents to support the schools with this process – guidelines, term of reference, templates, criteria against which evaluations are made, etc.

Appendix 12 Results Approval Report Template

The Results Approval Panel met			
Venue:			
Date:			
Time:			
In Attendance: (A minimum of three must be in attendance)	Name:	Role:	Signature:
Results Approval Panel Meeting Agenda			
Members of the Panel were reminded that the proceedings are confidential, and all documentation should be returned to the Quality Officer at the close of the meeting.			
Update on progress with the <i>Quality Improvement Plan</i> from previous meeting			
Consideration of <i>Internal Verification Report</i> and decisions made as a result			

Recommendations or actions to be implemented going forward
Consideration of the <i>External Authentication Report</i> and decisions made as a result
Recommendations or actions to be implemented going forward
Results Approval:
Confirmation of amendments to results (if any)
All results reviewed and approved by the Results Approval Panel
Agreement to submit the approved results QQI and to issue results to learners
Agreement to submit this report to the Quality Oversight Board
AOB

Next Meeting:

Venue:

Date:

Time:

The Quality Officer will:

- File all copies of confidential material securely. This includes signed and dated copies of the ***Internal Verification, External Authentication, and Results Approval Panel Reports***
- Update and submit the results to QQI via the QBS, in line with results signed off on by the Panel
- Issue results to learners asap

Signed _____ Chair of the Results Approval Panel

Name (Block Capitals) _____

Date _____

Appendix 13 School Progress Report to QOB Template

Each school submits a **School Progress Report** to FESU not less than a week before the meeting.

The report will follow the headings agreed by the QOB. These headings may vary from meeting to meeting depending on the agenda and decisions to be made at the meeting.

FESU analyses the reports as they are submitted and brings a report based on the findings to the QOB meeting.

Teaching and Learning	
Meeting Date and Time	
Quality Assurance and Risk	
Assessment and certification – numbers/repeats/results/issues raised at Internal Verification or External Authentication/concerns about academic integrity, etc.	
Learner Issues	

Review of Programmes – feedback from learners and teachers/tutors and other stakeholders	
Programme development/validation/revalidation	
Published Information	
Training Needed/CoP	
Name	
Signature	
Date	