QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Sector Specific

Institutes of Technology (IOTs)

Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines
developed by QQI for Institutes of Technology (other than DIT)

July 2016/QG5-V2 © **QQI**

Sector Specific
Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

DEVELOPED BY QQI FOR INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY (OTHER THAN DIT)

1 INTRODUCTION

These statutory, sector-specific, quality assurance (QA) guidelines for institutes of technology supplement the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines which are applicable to **all** providers. While the Core Statutory QA Guidelines provide the majority of the quality assurance guidance required, these sector-specific guidelines add to the core by addressing the specific responsibilities of the institutes of technology as set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 (the 2012 Act) and under the residual arrangements for delegation of authority to make awards.

Institutes of technology should also refer to QQI's other topic-specific quality assurance guidelines, as appropriate.

1.1 What is the purpose of these guidelines?

These guidelines set out additional, statutory, quality assurance guidelines specific to institutes of technology. These additional QA guidelines address the responsibilities of institutes of technology in the context of delegation of authority to make awards. They also address the institutes of technology as experienced higher education institutions seeking to continuously improve and enhance their internal quality assurance system.

1.2 To whom do they apply?

These guidelines are applicable to institutes of technology, other than Dublin Institute of Technology.

2   SCOPE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

National policy is that the provider-owned, quality assurance procedures of institutes of technology will be comprehensive. This means that such procedures will cover **all** education and training, research and related activities of the institute of technology (IOT). This should be understood to encompass all education programmes regardless of whether or not these lead to awards recognised in the NFQ or to awards (single and/or joint) of other awarding bodies or none. Procedures will also cover approval, monitoring and review of effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures and arrangements of other providers involved in making IOT awards.

In addition to, and integrated with, the (or by encompassing) regular periodic review of study programmes, institutes of technology with delegated authority to make awards should evaluate the effectiveness of academic, administrative and related services and in units such as schools, faculties and colleges. It may also be useful to undertake thematic reviews of institution-wide issues as part of the ongoing evaluation of academic, administrative and other services.

The explicit quality measures envisaged by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, May 2015* (ESG) in relation to approval, monitoring and periodic review of study programmes; supports and training for teaching staff and regular student feedback and complaints procedures; well-established mechanisms such as the external examiner system and institutional research and strategic planning functions can contribute significantly to quality.

Periodic quality review should be understood in the context of a range of other mechanisms in higher education institutions, with which they must interact and which they must support if they are to be fully effective. Integrated institutional approaches to quality improvement should be geared to eliminate unnecessary duplication, reduce burden and, most importantly, promote synergies. Such approaches should yield benefits and opportunities for the institutions to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures with a view to ongoing enhancement; identify and disseminate good practice; identify challenges and areas for improvement and how to address them; enhance the student experience; and enhance strategic and other planning as appropriate.

3   EUROPEAN REFERENCES

Ireland's European commitments are derived from our membership of the European Union (EU) and our participation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). These guidelines are underpinned by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Institutes of technology will also have regard to any European standards, guidelines, directives, policies or political commitments adopted nationally. Examples of such European commitments include, but are not limited to, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the ECTS Handbook 2015 and the Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, October, 2014 - these supplement the *QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards, 2012*.

4   RESEARCH

The institute of technology is responsible for organising an integrated system of quality assurance in relation to its research activities. These should build upon the peer review mechanisms widely employed in research funding and publication and incorporate relevant metrics. These should complement the specific procedures put in place to quality assure research education and training and national policy relating to the accreditation of doctoral research degrees under delegated authority.

5   RESPONSIBILITIES OF AWARDING BODIES

The guidelines are applicable to institutes of technology as independent awarding bodies in their own right (under delegation of authority by QQI to make awards), responsible for their own programmes of education and training, research and related services and for any programmes offered in association with other providers leading to awards made by the institutes.

Institutes of technology are required to have regard to core, statutory, quality assurance guidelines and to these sectoral, quality assurance guidelines when:

- •   Establishing, renewing and reviewing their own quality assurance procedures; and

- •   Evaluating the quality assurance procedures of other providers with whom they are engaged in the delivery of programmes leading to their own or joint awards.

5.1   Delegation of authority to make awards

Delegation of authority to make awards is subject to the requirements set out in the legislation, including procedures and criteria. Institutes of technology have:

a)   Robust procedures in place for the approval of programmes. Additional guidance on approval of programmes is available in the *Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI*.

b)   Robust procedures in place for assessment of learners agreed in sectoral conventions and protocols documented in *Assessment and Standards, 2013*.

c)   Due regard to the quality assurance approach to, and guidelines on, research degrees at NFQ level 9 as set out in the *Sectoral Protocols for the Awarding of Research Master Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under delegated authority (DA) from QQI*.

d)   Due regard to the quality assurance approach to, and guidelines on, making joint awards under the NFQ, as set out in the *Sectoral Protocols for the Delegation of Authority by QQI to the Institutes of Technology to make Joint Awards, May 2014*.

Procedures may be adapted as necessary in the context of institutional mergers, amalgamation and strategic alliances with designated awarding bodies.

6   STANDARDS AND AWARDS

Institutes of technology are required to establish procedures to ensure:

- Learners enrolled on programmes leading to awards recognised within the NFQ acquire the standard of knowledge, skill or competence associated with the level and award-type of that award in the NFQ.

- Each award of an institute of technology meets national standards established by QQI.

- All programmes:
  ~ for regulated professions meet the accreditation standards of the relevant professional recognition body.
  ~ offered leading to awards of other awarding bodies lead to awards recognised in the NFQ.

6.1   Procedures for certification

Institutes of technology should establish procedures for the certification of awards and maintenance of records as awarding bodies. These procedures should apply to all awards made by institutes of technology. These procedures shall have regard to:

- Award level, award class and type in the NFQ, including references to the total credit value of the award.

- Other such references that facilitate the implementation of the NFQ, such as the European Diploma Supplement.

7   OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This section refers to the quality assurance of collaborations with other providers. Institutes of technology must have procedures to approve collaboration arrangements with other providers and monitor and review the effectiveness of those arrangements. Institutes of technology should apply due diligence and be aware of any reputational risk to themselves and the sector and/or national qualifications system associated with particular, prospective providers with whom they are considering entering into collaboration arrangements.

Institutes of technology should have due regard to the quality assurance arrangements set out in the *QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (Revised 2012).*

The following is a summary of indicative areas that institutes of technology should consider when determining whether to enter into a collaborative arrangement with another provider or when determining to continue an existing collaborative arrangement with another provider.

1) Legal, reputation and compliance requirements

- Is the provider a legal entity, with education and training as a principal function? ~ Is the legal entity a clearly identified legal person, having rights and responsibilities under law?

- Has the provider clearly specified its dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations and subsidiaries?

- Has the provider declared any third-party relationships and partnerships?

- Does the provider comply with applicable regulations and legislation in all jurisdictions in which it operates?

- Is the provider in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any jurisdictions in which it operates (or in which its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrols learners, or in which it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators?

2) Resource, governance and structural requirements

- Is the provider stable and in good financial standing?

- Does the provider have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?

- Does the provider have fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision-making structures?

- Does the provider have arrangements for providing required information to the institute of technology?

- Does the provider have capacity to deliver education and training as demonstrated through experience and track record in providing education and training programmes?

- Does the provider have sufficient resources, as well as corporate, structural and internal quality assurance systems in place, to sustainably provide education and training programmes submitted for programme approval to the institute of technology?

3) Programme development and provision requirements

- Has the provider demonstrated its ability to design, develop, provide and review programmes as appropriate and comply with the standard conditions for programme approval specified by the institute of technology?

- Does the provider have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?

- Does the provider have fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources?

- Does the provider have structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learner achievement?

- Does the provider have arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners?

4)   *Significant changes to requirements*

Has the provider notified the institute of technology of any significant changes to the requirements set out in 1) to 3) above?

Institutes of technology may choose to adopt the following guidelines for their collaborative providers, QQI *Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines, Statutory QA Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary Basis, April 2016*.

Sector Specific

www.QQI.ie

26-27 Denzille Lane
Dublin 2
D02 P266
Ireland