

QQI Review Report 2021

Inaugural Review of
Limerick & Clare Education and Training Board



QQI REVIEW

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Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that providers have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI conducts external reviews of providers of further and higher education and training on a cyclical basis. QQI is currently conducting the inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards. Cyclical review is an element of the broader quality framework for ETBs composed of: statutory quality assurance guidelines; quality assurance approval; annual quality reporting; dialogue meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; validation of programmes; and, most crucially, the quality assurance system established by each ETB. The inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards runs from 2020-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the sixteen education and training boards. On conclusion of the sixteen reviews, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying system-level observations and findings.

The inaugural review evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each ETB with a particular focus on the arrangements for the governance and management of quality; teaching, learning and assessment; and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. These are considered in the context of the expectations set out in the relevant QQI statutory quality assurance guidelines and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures.

The review methodology is based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to review:

- a self-evaluation conducted by the provider, resulting in the production of a self-evaluation report;
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers (due to the government's restrictions due to COVID-19, the review team completed a virtual visit);
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This inaugural virtual review of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference at Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team.

The Review Team

Each inaugural review is carried out by a team of independent experts and peers. The 2021 inaugural review of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team attended a virtual briefing and training session with QQI staff on 2 February 2021 and the virtual planning visit to Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board took place on 3 February 2021. The main virtual review was conducted by the full team via Microsoft Teams between 22 and 26 March 2021.

In structuring the timetable for the review visit, the review team began with a focus on the learner experience and the approach of learning practitioners and their managers. The team then looked at the supports for learners and learning practitioners, the QA policies guiding teaching and learning, the infrastructure for the assessment of learning, the evaluation of the programme outcomes, the planning of programmes and the effectiveness of the governing structures. The final stage was to get the views of external stakeholders.

The team held 39 meetings with LCETB staff and stakeholders, 64 private team meetings, interviewed 190 attendees, identified 335 questions, and completed individual reports on all interviews identifying emerging issues for consideration, good practice, commendations, and recommendations.

The report follows the structure provided by QQI and is based on sections of the QQI Statutory QA Guidelines.

The Review Team were:

Chair

Mr Glen McMahon joined Belfast Metropolitan College in 2013 as International Manager, responsible for developing and driving and implementing a sustainable international framework. This involved developing innovative vocational education and training partnerships through collaborative projects focusing on digital transformation, work-based learning and staff development. He has gained extensive EU project management experience and subsequently assumed responsibility for developing successful educational partnerships with both the private and public sectors.

Glen currently sits on the EU Vocational Education Training Network Project Committee which consists of 55 colleges across 5 countries looking at strategy and policy reforms as well as acting as a critical friend across various international education projects.

Glen has a keen interest in the development of vocational education systems and keeping up to date with system-wide developments and approaches internationally, representing Northern Ireland colleges at various international education missions and forums including the British Council CEO Policy Roundtable, focusing on Internationalising the UK Industrial Strategy

Coordinating Reviewer

Mr David Treacy was Education Officer with the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee for eight years with responsibility for adult education services and further education colleges prior to the VEC becoming an ETB in 2013. He became Director of Further Education and Training with the formation of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board and was responsible for managing the transfer of two ex-FÁS training centres to the ETB in 2014. He was responsible for the strategic planning and delivery of further education and training in the city, with a budget of over €80m, and for managing CDETb's relationships with SOLAS and QQI. He represented CDETb on the Government's National Advisory Committee for the piloting of the Youth Guarantee scheme in Ballymun in 2015 and on the North Inner City Development Initiative in 2016. He managed the development of the quality assurance policies and procedures, transitioning from 21 quality assurance systems to four, and the re-engagement process with QQI in 2017.

Prior to his role with CDETb, David had a lengthy career as a youth worker in a number of national voluntary organisations. He entered CDVEC as director on the City of Dublin Youth Service Board – the youth work development agency of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. He was a member of the Government's National Youth Work Advisory Committee which produced the first Youth Work Development Plan. Later he was on the Government's National Youth Facilities and Services Fund which funded the development of youth work facilities and services in the 12 drugs task force areas in the country.

He has also worked as a Youth Work Assessor in the Department of Education and Science and as a part-time lecturer in Maynooth University where he completed his MA.

David is a member of the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work. The NSETS is an initiative of the Departments of Education in the Republic of Ireland and Northern

Ireland. As a member of the NSETS, David continues to chair professional endorsement panels with third level institutions on the island of Ireland on behalf of NSETS.

David chairs panels for QA approval processes for QQI and has most recently chaired reengagement evaluations for the National Adult Literacy Agency and the International Centre for Security Excellence

Peer Expert

Mr Kim Faurschou, Cand. Merc. MBA is a Director of Faco International Sciencepark, an independent private consulting company based in Odense, Denmark. Kim has worked at University of Southern Denmark for many years in the area of strategy and competence development.

Since the late 1990's he has been involved in quality assurance and various developments in vocational and adult education and training. Kim was one of the experts supporting the development of the current European Quality Framework EQAVET and has contributed to this process for around 20 years. He has worked as a researcher, process consultant, and evaluator and especially as a "Critical Friend" for the European Commission, ENQAVET, EQAVET, CEDEFOP, the European Training Foundation, ViSKA project, Nordic Council of Ministers and a number of projects, ministries and organisations in Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, UK, Mexico, Cyprus, Ireland, Norway, and Malta.

Kim is an experienced evaluator with many years of professional experience in the area of QA in education and training, quality in VET and social inclusion. He has been one of EQAVET experts since the network was established and contributed to the network by making background papers, peer reviews, analysis, reports and has been master of ceremony of many of the networks Annual Meetings. Kim is still an EQAVET expert in the current work programme.

Learner Representative

Martina McKearney is employed as a Senior Staff Officer with Monaghan County Council and has over 36 years of professional experience working for the local authority. Martina has worked in many different departments across the organisation namely Roads, Sanitary Services, IT Department, Housing, Motor Taxation and is currently working in the Human Resources Department. Martina was recently promoted to the role of Training Officer and has the duty of managing the learning and

professional development of the organisation's workforce, assessing the training needs of employees, sourcing and facilitating learning programmes and arranging training for all staff to assist them in their job roles. Martina recently undertook a Training & Development course with Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board which she found excellent and of benefit to her in her current role as Training Officer.

Peer Expert

Mrs Ann Heelan CEO of AHEAD for 20 years, has particular expertise in inclusive education and Universal Design for Learning. Originally a teacher in both HE and FET, she has experience of curriculum planning and assessment and has written many guidelines on needs assessment and all aspects of inclusive practice. She is committed to ensuring that ALL students, including those with disabilities, learn in the mainstream classroom with their peers as much as possible. Over the years she has played a leadership role introducing UDL to HE and FET supporting institutions and individuals in becoming more inclusive in their practice.

Ann is a skilled facilitator and has worked collaboratively setting up Networks of Inclusive Practice supporting professionals to share information and solve difficulties arising from the complex nature of diversity and inclusion questions.

Industry Representative

Dr Oran Doherty is currently employed by IBEC as the Manager of the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision Programme. Prior to IBEC, Oran was employed by the Department of Education and Skills as the Regional Skills Forum Manager for the North West of Ireland. Oran was also employed as the Recognition of Prior Learning and Work-based Learning Coordinator with Letterkenny Institute of Technology from 2006-2016. His main area of expertise is in future skills, work-based learning and recognition of prior learning, He completed his doctorate in work-based learning partnerships between industry and education providers in 2017. Oran has delivered workshops on future skills, recognition of prior learning and work-based learning throughout Ireland and Europe in recent years. In addition to his academic experience, Oran has also worked in a number of sectors including Finance, IT, Retail and Hospitality.

Section

1

Introduction and Context



Executive Summary

The review team have read, analysed and discussed the reports and documentation provided by the ETB and have met a wide range of staff, learners, members of the management team, collaborative partners, and external stakeholders. The review team had a very positive and constructive engagement with the ETB and commends it on the successful completion of the statutory review process in the middle of a global pandemic while managing to maintain their commitment to their learners.

This executive summary highlights the key priority commendations and recommendations; the full details are contained in Section 5 of this report. The commendations and recommendations are intended to be constructive and supportive to the ETB in achieving its stated objectives.

The review team was presented with many examples of excellent practices which have been intentionally developed within the ETB to improve the quality of both learner and staff experience. The review team commends the ETB on these developments. Examples include:

- There is an openness and transparency in communications with the public.
- The development of new programmes to respond to identified needs e.g., the development of the new apprenticeship in hairdressing.
- The development of a centrally managed external authentication management system to improve the quality and consistency of the EA process and the collection of data on learning outcomes.
- The development of separate support services for learners which means there is a co-ordinated and integrated response to learner needs.
- The development of a quality assurance support service to drive quality assurance across the FET system.
- The development of an enterprise engagement support service raising the profile of the ETB regionally and helping to pull together the ETB's response to the needs of employers.
- The promotion of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) through the CPD of learning practitioners.

The review team commends the ETB on the progress it has made to date in developing its quality assurance policies and procedures and its commitment to their further development. LCETB is also to be commended on its commitment to “a learner centred, holistic and tailored approach” (SER p.75) to teaching and learning. In the SER and during the main review visit, there was clear evidence of a culture of learning in the organisation and evidence that staff are fully committed to creating a quality learning environment.

Based on its analysis, the review team recommends enhancements in the following key areas:

First, assessment is a critical part of the learning process. It is the review team's view that, in the near future, a strategic decision will need to be made about the assessment system that will apply within the quality assurance system, which is a stated objective. In the meantime, any dated assessment instruments must be reviewed, and stronger measures put in place to monitor consistency of assessments across further education provision. The report makes detailed recommendations in this regard.

Secondly, the review team recommends that the ETB undertake an audit of existing legacy programmes in FET to identify those that are currently of limited value to learners and their progression ambitions. Priority should be given to developing new programmes to replace any dated programmes which are currently impacting on progression opportunities for learners. Given the resource implications, this may best be achieved in collaboration with other ETBs.

In addition, the ETB should prioritise the move from multiple versions of programmes at lower levels of the NFQ currently being delivered across the three regions of the ETB to single programmes.

Thirdly, creating a culture of self-evaluation is a critical component of effective quality assurance systems where "all of a provider's staff and learners are involved in quality assurance, and in which quality is accepted as a responsibility of all to improve upon." (Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines 2016 p. 8). This has two dimensions: creating processes for reflection, review, and feedback for learning practitioners, and creating mechanisms for capturing learner feedback.

This report makes recommendations that are intended to strengthen the role of the external authenticator, expand communities of practice, engage learning practitioners in centre evaluations and create peer reviews of assessment instruments at programme level.

Learner feedback should be captured in a consistent manner across FET provision and inform review at centre and central level.

The review team wishes LCETB well on its continuing journey to enhance the learner experience and in the ongoing development and implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance system in line with the QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines and the ETB Sector-Specific QA Guidelines.

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Introduction

As part of QQI Statutory Review of Education and Training Boards, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board submitted its provider profile to QQI in October 2020; their Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was submitted in December 2020. The LCETB senior management team and their Review Steering Group met virtually for a planning meeting (3 February 2021) with the review team chair and co-ordinating reviewer.

Mission and Vision

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board is the state authority for education and training in the Limerick and Clare region. The ETB was established in 2013 by the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. This involved the amalgamation of three Vocational Education Committees (VECs), which provided post-primary, adult and community education in Limerick City, County Limerick and County Clare. It also assumed responsibility for two former FÁS Training Centres in Limerick and Clare on 1 July 2014 – these centres had previously been operated under the auspices of SOLAS.

In its Strategic Statement 2017-2021, LCETB states it plays a leading role in the provision of high-quality education and training in Limerick and Clare. It achieves its mission “by transforming the lives of our students, our learners, our communities and the social and economic prosperity of the region through responding to student/learner, community and enterprise needs.” (Provider Profile 2020 p4)

In addition to its extensive further education and training provision described below, it has responsibility for 25 post-primary and community national schools across the two counties. Its annual operational budget is €173 million, and it employs over 2,500 staff.

LCETB Strategic Goals

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board’s Strategic Statement 2017-2021 charts the path for its education and training provision, youth work and other statutory functions. It set out four strategic goals.

- **Strategic Goal 1: High-Quality Student and Learner Experiences:** To provide comprehensive high-quality education, training and lifelong opportunities to address the personal, social, economic and employability needs of people in the communities in Limerick and Clare.
- **Strategic Goal 2: Staff Development and Organisational Development:** To provide a supportive, collaborative, safe and healthy working environment for all staff, through the provision of relevant response supports, appropriate policies and procedures which are underpinned by a culture of continuous professional development.
- **Strategic Goal 3: Good Governance:** To provide a governance and support framework that facilitates the effective and efficient delivery of all education and training services.
- **Strategic Goal 4: Partnership:** To provide relevant responses and supports as required by the Department of Education, other government departments, and agencies and to develop effective partnerships which respond to the evolving education and training needs of the region.

These goals are the overarching framework for the FET Division's 5-year strategic plan and their annual operational plans.

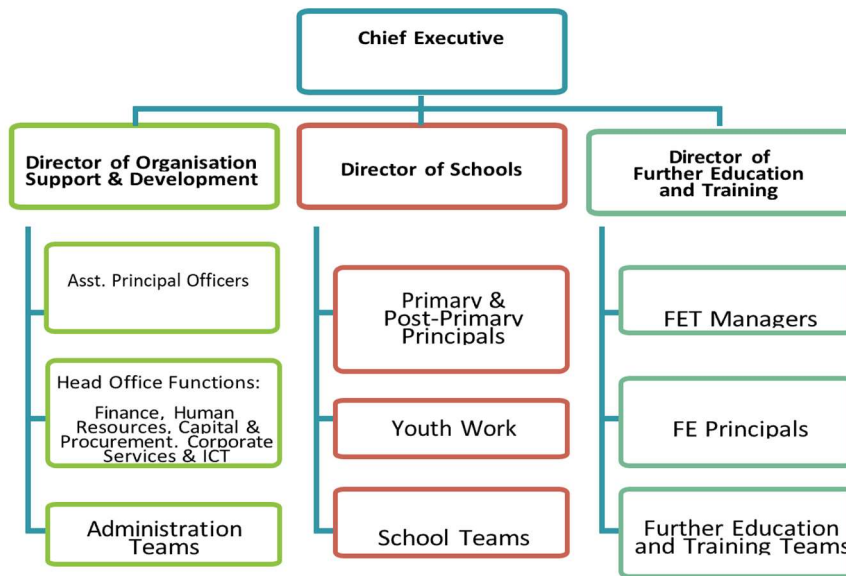
Governance and Management Structure

The governance and management structures and responsibilities of each ETB are set out in the Education and Training Board Act 2013. The Board of Limerick and Clare ETB comprises 12 members of the local authority, two elected members of staff, two elected parent representatives and five special interest/community representatives. The Board has appointed several committees to support it in its functions: an audit and risk committee; a finance committee; the schools' boards of management; an FET steering group and a youth work committee.

The executive functions are managed through three separate but interlinked divisions:

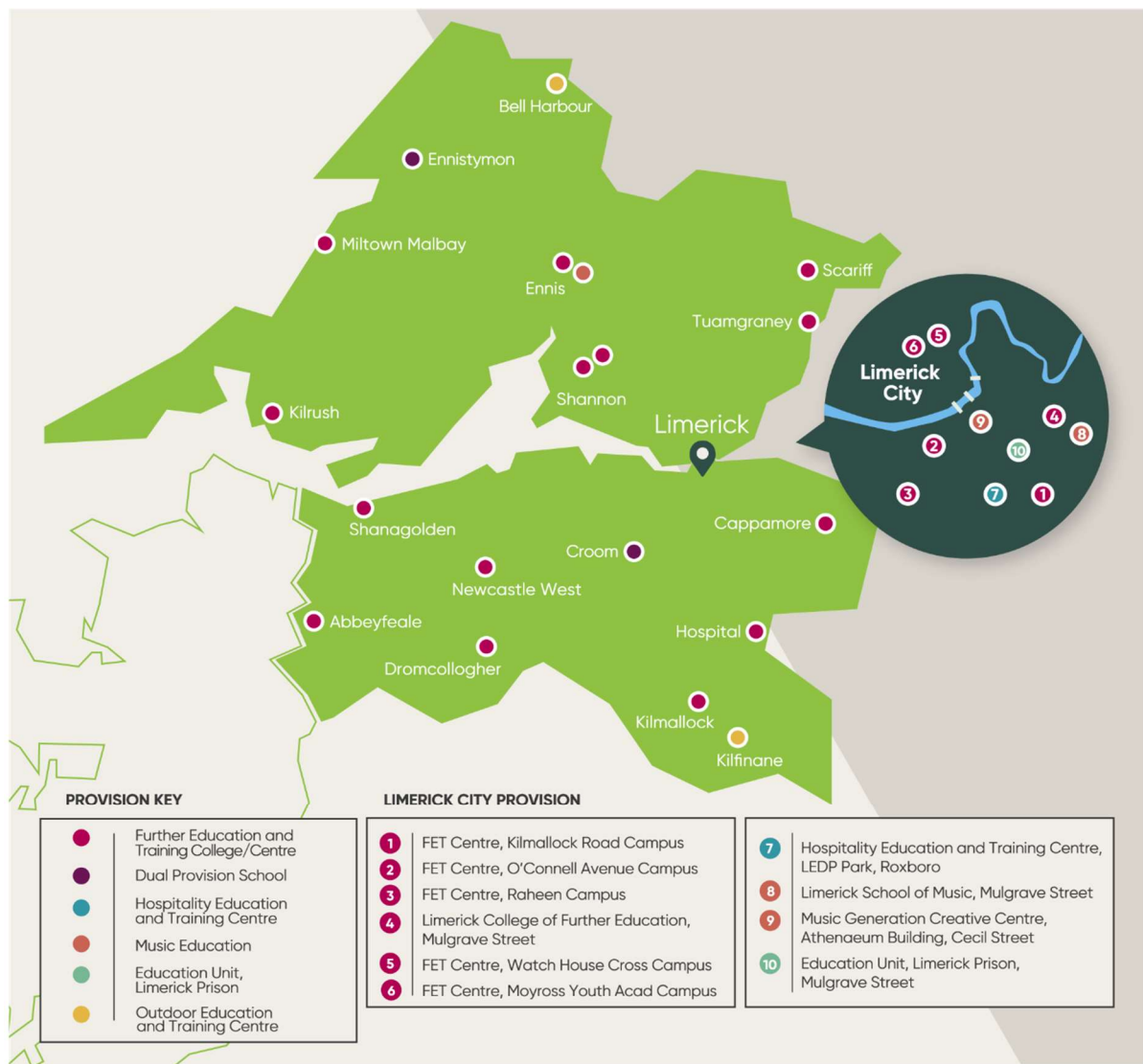
- Organisation Support and Development,
- Schools, and
- Further Education and Training.

Each division has its own director reporting to the Chief Executive.



Further Education and Training Division

The Further Education and Training Division is responsible for the management and operation of 37 QQI-registered FET centres in Limerick and Clare, where it provides a suite of full-time and part-time provision and support services. It should be noted that there are multiple FET campuses in Limerick and Clare and that the FET Division has responsibility for approximately 300 community-based locations. In County Clare, the FET centres provide pathways for learners to the new colleges of further education in Ennis and Shannon. The map below provides a profile of FET college/centre locations throughout Limerick and Clare.



The types of further education and training provision include:

- Apprenticeships
- Traineeships
- Post-Leaving Certificate courses at levels 5 and 6
- Specific skills training
- Local training initiatives
- Specialist training provision (e.g. training for persons with disabilities)
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
- Youthreach & community training centres

- Vocational and Employee Skills Development (BTEI and SWF)
- Community education
- Core Skills
- Prison Education Service
- Evening courses across a range of FET centres
- Skills to Advance
- ESOL

In addition, it provides a range of hospitality-related education and training programmes at its Hospitality Education and Training Centre, Roxboro, Limerick. This centre was the first in the country to receive the coveted European 'Excellence Framework for Quality Management' award in 2016.

The FET Division is also responsible for the management of music education provision across the region. Limerick School of Music has been providing music tuition to over 1,300 young people and adults annually for many decades. It also supports Maoín Cheoil an Chláir which provides music tuition to over 300 students annually in the Ennis area, and the ETB is also the lead partner in two Music Generation programmes based in Limerick City and Co. Clare.

Underpinning the above education and training provision are support services. These include:

- Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Support Service
- Information, Recruitment and Guidance Support Service
- Enterprise Engagement Support Service
- Quality Assurance Support Service
- Professional Development Support Service
- Planning, Resourcing, Information and Management Support Service
- FARR and PLSS Planning Support
- Active Inclusion Support Service
- Technology-Enhanced Learning Support Service

Strategy of the FET Division

The LCETB FET Strategic Framework 2015-2020 was developed in line with the organisation's strategic statement and the SOLAS Strategy 2014-2019. It is built around the key principles of respect, equality, professionalism, integration, responsiveness, support, and collaboration. It identified four strategic priorities:

- **Strategic Priority 1: Access and Progression:** Supporting learners to access and sustain participation in education and training and to progress in key aspects of their lives, including personal development, further education and/or employment.
- **Strategic Priority 2: Quality Teaching and Learning:** Promoting a culture of continuous improvement and organisational learning in the FET Division, so that staff, learners, employers and communities have confidence in the quality and relevance of FET in Limerick and Clare.
- **Strategic Priority 3: Stakeholder Engagement:** Communicating with learners, staff, community partners, employers, other agencies, and education providers and using feedback to enhance the quality and relevance of our work.
- **Strategic Priority 4: Effectiveness and Accountability in Governance and Leadership:** Ensuring that the quality of our education and training provision is supported by ETB management and administration systems that meet the highest standards of accountability, transparency and compliance.

Contextual Factors

Regional Profile

The total population of the Limerick and Clare region is 313,802 (Census 2016). County Limerick's total population is 195,175, of which 94,192 people live in Limerick City and suburban areas, while County Clare has a population of 118,627. Limerick is the third most populous urban area in the state, and the fourth most populous city on the island of Ireland.

Changing population patterns have mostly affected the Limerick metropolitan area, with a significant population increase in parts of the city centre. In contrast, the largest population decline was observed in the four areas designed for regeneration by the Irish Government. In terms of age profile, the national trend of younger urban centres and ageing rural areas is mirrored in Limerick and Clare (+26% over 65 in County Clare). The age dependency ratio, which shows the ratio of people aged under 14 and over 65 to people of working age (aged 15-64) has also increased in line with national figures.

Employment

In terms of employment, in Q4 2019, the Mid-West region accounted for 9.1% of employment in Ireland and had an unemployment rate of 4.9% – down from 19.5% in Q1 2012. However, Ireland's unemployment rate is now predicted to surge, from 4.8% in February 2020 to 18% in the second quarter, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the March 2020 ESRI Quarterly report, Ireland's economy could contract by at least 7.1%. This is a significant reversal of trends forecasted prior to the outbreak, when it was predicted that the economy would grow by 4% this year. The Mid-West region has benefited from several job announcements in recent years, but this growth could be significantly impacted by an economic downturn.

In addition, 21 of the 79 electoral divisions (EDs) (27%) in the country classified as unemployment blackspots are in the Limerick and Clare region. Limerick City is the worst affected area nationally with a total of 17 unemployment blackspots, 8 of which are among the top 10 most affected blackspots nationally. These statistics reflect the challenges faced by LCETB in terms of addressing the needs of its target groups. In addition, with both urban and rural districts in its catchment area, the ETB is very aware that underemployment is prevalent in rural locations within the Limerick and Clare region.

Rural disadvantage can be associated with limited employment opportunities, lack of transport and other services, high dependency on state allowances and assistance, and isolation. This presents a challenge in terms of upskilling and for occupation-specific skill development in the region.

Job creation in the mid-west region has grown in recent years, with 17 foreign direct investments. The main employment sector is the services sector followed by commerce, trade, and manufacturing. Key growth areas identified by the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum are biotechnology, medical technology, ICT, aerospace, tourism, agri-business, and logistics.

The review took place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 global pandemic, which will have a significant impact on the economy in the region and will most probably result in social and economic challenges for communities in the region. Educationally vulnerable adults are now at high risk of being left behind and the crisis will likely further accelerate the digitalisation of the labour market and requirements. This will have an impact on the strategic priorities of the ETB.

In the SER the ETB state “clear strategic priorities are emerging for the sector in terms of upskilling and digital skills development, active inclusion, the role of Community Education for social cohesion, learner supports, TEL, professional development and the development of closer links across FET and HE towards an effective tertiary education sector.” (p. 12) It was evident to the review team in meetings with employers that the ETB’s engagement with them and their response to employer needs was also a strategic priority in practice.

Governance of Quality Assurance

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

Quality assurance is recognised by the ETB’s FET Division as a multi-layered process that seeks to comply with the QQI Sector-Specific Guidelines for the ETB Sector “Given the distributed, diverse and evolving nature of ETBs, it is important that a multi-layered system be in place so that quality and its assurance is monitored in a consistent and appropriate way within and across the various constituent divisions or institutions of an ETB.” (p5)

The ETB describes the multi-layered approach to QA management operating in the organisation as follows:

- **Centre level at learning practitioner level:** Tutor/teacher/instructor and learner, with communication, instruction, teaching, assessment briefs, marking schemes, assessment, feedback, portfolio preparation and submission, etc.
- **Centre QA Management Level:** Selection, recruitment, induction, assessment planning, portfolio receipt, QBS entry, internal verification management, external authentication (EA) coordination, results approval panel (RAP), learner results notification, appeals, staff allocation and development, self-evaluation
- **Cross-Centre QA Functions:** Programme development, communities of practice, central appeals, common EA panel, CPD schedule, self-evaluation process, monitoring and self-improvement, etc.
- **LCETB Quality Assurance Support Service:** Develops, implements, manages, supports all cross-centre and centre level QA activities, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating provision at centre level.
- **LCETB Quality Council and FET Steering Group:** Corporate planning, oversight, governance. Considers LCETB quality provision, reviewing monitoring, self-evaluation, certification, risk factors, critical indicators. (Executive Self-Evaluation Report 2017 p 12-13)

“As outlined in QQI’s Core Quality Assurance Guidelines, quality and its assurance are primarily the responsibility of providers of education and training. Self-evaluation and review are fundamental elements of a provider’s quality assurance system and the ETBs’ external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review of quality assurance by QQI.” (Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards Review Handbook p2).

The ETB completed a re-engagement process with QQI in 2017, which resulted in the formal approval of its QA policy and procedures by QQI. The process resulted in the development of a three-year QA continuous improvement plan (CIP). This CIP is reviewed on an annual basis and the revised annual CIP is published on the website. From its review of the SER and discussions with the ETB internal and external stakeholders during the main review visit, the review team found that the ETB is committed to quality assurance and enhancements of all its programmes and support services to improve learner and learning practitioner experience across the FET Division.

The ETB has put in place a formal QA governance structure and is developing an internal culture that supports quality assurance and enhancement. A commitment to collaboration is expressed in the ETB’s SER and was reflected in interviews with management, staff and learners across the range of FET provision. This approach to quality is aligned with the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines.

The Further Education and Training quality assurance governance structures were formalised following the 2017 executive self-evaluation process with QQI and the current structures have been in

place since 2019. The structures operate to defined terms of reference and can be summarised as follows:

- The role of the FET Steering Group is to oversee all operational matters relating to the FET Division.
- The role of the Quality Council (QC) is to oversee all quality assurance aspects related to the design, development, approval, implementation, monitoring and review of education and training provision. It has delegated authority to make recommendations to the Chief Executive and is chaired by the FET Director. The first meeting of the Quality Council took place on 25February 2019.
- The Quality Council Sub-Group (Quality Assurance) has responsibility for the development, oversight, planning, co-ordination, and improvement of quality assurance policies, procedures, and processes.
- The Quality Council Sub-Group (Programme Governance) has responsibility for the oversight, planning, co-ordination, development, and quality of all the programmes of LCETB.
- FET Strategic Regional Planning Network has responsibility for the FET strategic planning and the development of a co-ordinated response across the region.

The Quality Council subgroups report to the Quality Council. The FET Steering Group, The Quality Council and the FET Strategic Planning Network are chaired by the Director of FET. The Director of FET reports to the Chief Executive as part of the Senior Management Team, who, in turn, reports to the Board of the ETB.

The Further Education and Training quality assurance governance structures were formalised following the 2017 executive self-evaluation process with QQI and the current structures have been in place since 2019. The structures operate to defined terms of reference and can be summarised as follows:

- The role of the **FET Steering Group** is to oversee all operational matters relating to the FET Division.
- The role of the **Quality Council** (QC) is to oversee all quality assurance aspects related to the design, development, approval, implementation, monitoring and review of education and training provision. It has delegated authority to make recommendations to the Chief Executive and is chaired by the FET Director. The first meeting of the Quality Council took place on 25February 2019.
- The **Quality Council Sub-Group (Quality Assurance)** has responsibility for the development, oversight, planning, co-ordination, and improvement of quality assurance policies, procedures, and processes.

- The **Quality Council Sub-Group (Programme Governance)** has responsibility for the oversight, planning, co-ordination, development, and quality of all the programmes of LCETB.
- **FET Strategic Regional Planning Network** has responsibility for the FET strategic planning and the development of a co-ordinated response across the region.

The Quality Council subgroups report to the Quality Council. The FET Steering Group, The Quality Council and the FET Strategic Planning Network are chaired by the Director of FET. The Director of FET reports to the Chief Executive as part of the Senior Management Team, who, in turn, reports to the Board of the ETB.



Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

Self-evaluation Report (SER)

The ETB began the process of preparing for the statutory review process in January 2020. The FET Director set up a Quality Assurance Review Task Group, to oversee the design and implementation of the QAR process. The ETB governance structures were fully briefed on the process and the approach adopted from the outset.

The QA Review Task Group had specific terms of references, which set out the tasks of steering the design and implementation of a FET Division-wide self-evaluation process and overseeing the production of the SER and Provider Profile. The task group facilitated the review team's visits and will assist in the development of the ETB response to the review team's formal report.

The group was chaired by the FET Director, and consisted of 21 members representing administration and the diversity of FET provision from across the FET Division. The Research, Planning and Evaluation Officer was nominated as QA Review Coordinator.

The Review Coordinator commenced a campaign of providing information to all FET staff, learners, and stakeholders through:

- posters in all centres,
- emails to staff,
- the QA newsletter, and
- the use of social media including the website and Signage Live (a digital signage software).

This set the scene to encourage the participation of staff, learners, and other stakeholders in the review process.

The review process commenced with the conduction of a benchmarking exercise by desk review in line with the QQI Inaugural Review of QA Handbook. In addition, FET centres were required to undertake a review of their own processes and these reports fed into the SWOT analysis undertaken by the Task Group.

Significant efforts were made to consult with a wide range of stakeholders from across the organisation during the self-evaluation process, including staff in all roles in the organisation and learners across the ETB's FET provision, as well as collaborative partners and external stakeholders. As the work progressed, the Senior Management Team reviewed progress and the Chief Executive updated the Board. QAR Surveys were conducted with staff (360), learners (328), (SER p15) community partners and employers. In addition, staff and learners were also surveyed as part of the Self-evaluation of Covid-19-Response (May 2020) with a response rate of 126 staff and 300 learners. Staff across the FET Division were updated on the progress of the self-evaluation process through briefings at centre level and the quarterly publication of the QA newsletter.

Case studies were developed based on the good practice identified through the centres' self-evaluation process and these were included in the SER.

In September 2020, subgroups reviewed the evidence and drafted recommendations for inclusion in the report. In October, there was a facilitated two-day session to enable the Task Group to review the main findings and recommendations. In addition, the Provider Profile was submitted to QQI on 16 October. On 3 December, the Task Group submitted the final report to the Quality Council for approval. The final report follows the structure provided by the QQI Review Handbook and was submitted to QQI later in December.

Observations

The SER is a comprehensive document that provides an outline of LCETB's approach to quality assurance and enhancement. It is clear from the document that the approach to planning and quality assurance is aligned with the organisation's strategic plan. The ETB used the opportunity created by the review and the SER development processes to identify several recommendations that are currently being implemented. This is indicative of the developmental approach taken by the ETB to the self-evaluation exercise.

While this was an important aspect of the report, the review team concluded that the list of recommendations identified was not a comprehensive list and did not include some strategic areas that will need further development; those areas are addressed throughout this report. While the SER (p55) identified "the replacement of the current dual curriculum with a single curriculum across Further Education and Training is a priority", this was considered to refer to the fact that several versions of the same programme exist since the merger of the three VECs and the two FÁS training centres. The SER did not clearly highlight the existence of dated legacy programmes and associated assessment

instruments In some cases, the recommendations identified did not seem to arise from a specific risk set out in the SER text.

The review team also notes that the use of data across the SER was limited. The use of data to drive decision-making was not strongly evident in the document, nor was it clear which metrics are used to measure performance across different areas of provision. To address these gaps in the information provided, the review team used opportunities during the visit to seek further information on the use of data to inform decision-making. This is dealt with in further detail in section 3 below.

Commendations

The review team commends LCETB on the process of consultation and collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders in the preparation of a comprehensive self-evaluation report. This was a significant achievement given the impact of, and challenges posed by, the Covid-19 global pandemic.

The review team commends LCETB on the preparation of a comprehensive and reflective SER and provider profile.

A construction worker wearing a yellow hard hat and a teal t-shirt is working on a metal structure. He is looking upwards and has his hands on a horizontal metal bar. The background is a blurred industrial setting.

Section

3

Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

ETB Mission & Strategy

LCETB's Strategic Statement 2017-2021 states that it plays a leading role in the provision of high-quality education and training in Limerick and Clare. It achieves its mission "by transforming the lives of our students, our learners, our communities and the social and economic prosperity of the region through responding to student/learner, community and enterprise needs." (Provider Profile 2020, p4)

Observations

There is evidence of a shared corporate vision of the organisation's mission across the organisation. While the mission statement is very visible in the organisation, for example it is visible in the backdrop to the virtual meetings, on all publications, and in all FET centres, the importance of the mission statement to giving direction to the work was articulated to the review team by senior management, heads of centres and learning practitioners across the organisation. This was also evident in conversation with administration staff who saw their role as supporting the achievement of the mission through their roles in HR, finance, facilities, procurement, etc.

This is a significant achievement given the level of change involved in the merger of three VECs and the transfer of two FÁS training centres to the control of the ETB.

The Strategic Statement 2017-2021 contains four key strategic goals which are set out and detailed above. The annual operation plan sets out the actions to be taken each year to achieve these goals and is available to the public on its website. While there were broad KPIs set in the SOLAS Strategic Agreement, the review team were of the view that operational plans did not have KPIs set out for each division and local centre.

Commendation

The review team commends LCETB for the transformation that it has driven in the organisation's structural development and strategic planning, given the complexities involved in the merger of four organisations.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that LCETB describe how they will measure their performance and establish key performance indicators across the departments in order to achieve their stated strategic objectives.

Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance

Observations

The governance structures of LCETB are set out in the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, which defines the reserved functions of the board of the ETB and the executive functions of the chief executive. The senior management team consists of three directors reporting to a chief executive and the division of management responsibilities is set out in the section on contextual factors above.

In addition, the executive is required to act in accordance with the Code of Governance of Education and Training Boards and the Code of Governance for Public Sector Bodies; circulars issued by the Department of Education; the terms of funding and planning set out by SOLAS; the requirements of the Comptroller and Auditor General; and the stipulations of the Teaching Council with respect to regulated staff and other relevant statutory obligations as public sector bodies.

The board appoints an audit committee and a finance committee with external representation to aid it in fulfilling its statutory functions. The composition of the board is set out in the Act and includes nominees from the local authority, the community and two elected staff representatives.

The QQI Sector-Specific Guidelines for the ETB sector state that “the QA procedures for governance and management will take account of the overall corporate responsibility of the ETB, vested in the Chief Executive and supported by the senior management team of the ETB, in all aspects of strategy, governance and management of quality assurance throughout the corporate entity.” (p5)

Arising from the re-engagement process with QQI in 2017, LCETB introduced new QA governance structures reporting to the Chief Executive. The FET Steering Committee and Quality Council and its subcommittees have been in place since 2019. The Director of FET chairs the Quality Council and the FET Steering Committee. The committees have staff drawn from across FET provision and centres.

It was clarified for the review team that while the terms of reference define these structures as decision making and reporting to the Chief Executive, issues arising in these structures may in effect be referred to the senior management team by the Director of FET. The review team concluded that these QA governance structures are in effect staff consultative structures and have the added value of enabling staff across the ETB's programmes and services to actively participate in and contribute to the development of policies and procedures. These structures have supported the building of relationships and collaboration across the FET services and have assisted the beginning of a journey towards an integrated service. This also contributes to the ongoing development of a quality culture in the organisation.

While the review team is supportive of the consultative nature of these structures, it is important to note that there is no external or learner representation on these governance structures and as such they are not fully consistent with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines requirement for "objective oversight" (p5). The terms of reference of the Quality Council allow for external representation. This would enable the ETB to admit external expertise to the deliberations of the Council. External representation would also enhance the independence of the body given the role of validating the results approval and making recommendation on programme development. Their introduction should be prioritised in the next phase in development of the QA governance structures.

The new Quality Council and its sub-committees have been in place since 2019 and it is too early to review the effectiveness of the new structures. The review team believe that it would be good practice for the ETB to review the effectiveness of the QA governance structures as decision-making structures and to determine their contribution to the development of QA policies and procedures after two years of operating. This may provide an opportunity to streamline the structures.

Commendation

The review team commends the ETB for its commitment to quality assurance as well as the provision of evidence of the ongoing embedding of a quality culture across the organisation.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the ETB act on the terms of reference of the Quality Council, which allow for the appointment of external stakeholders or external expertise to the Council.

- The review team recommends that the ETB ensure that quality assurance work is organised as simply and efficiently as possible, and that key quality criteria and goals are understood and used by all internal and external stakeholders.

Documentation of Quality Assurance

Observations

The review team examined the current range of publications for learners and found them to be clear and professionally produced. The commitment of the organisation to transparency is clear. The LCETB website contains all FET strategic statements and annual operational plans and evaluation reports together with all quality assurance policies and procedures. A reader can track the development of the work of the organisation from year to year. The standardisation of policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and equitable process of quality assurance is embedded and central to the organisational development of quality assurance.

However, it is not clear in the publications what are the principles that underpin the ETB's approach to QA. At times, in the interviews with staff, the terms "standards" and "standardisation" are used as if they mean the same thing. In some interviews it seemed that the objective of QA policies and procedures was to introduce a standardisation of all procedures across all FET provision. At other times, the purpose was described as the introduction of a set of policies and standards that all centres should achieve and maintain. This approach would recognise the multi-layered nature of QA and, recognising the individual responsibility of learner practitioners for QA, build on best practice, recognise subsidiarity at centre level, promote planning and evaluation at class level and centre level and include a strong learner voice, without undermining the stated standard required. While the SER (p32) details a multi-layered approach to quality and states that responsibilities and accountability exist at different levels, this differentiation needs to be clearer to staff and stakeholders.

It is important for all learning practitioners and support staff to understand that the QA policy and procedures are there to support the quality of teaching and learning and the consistency of the learner experience and that the procedures are not an end in their own right.

In this context, the review team suggests that LCETB examine their understanding of good quality, define it and the method by which they will measure quality delivered, simplify the current approach to quality assurance, and be clear in communications (both internal and external) about both their definitions and procedures/systems.

EQAVET (the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) is a European project that has developed a QA Reference Framework and tools to assist organisations to develop their quality assurance systems. The EQAVET website provides examples of different approaches used by VET providers across the EU. It focuses on developing a quality culture in organisations and

developing a culture of self-evaluation at practitioner level. This framework will help implement the review team's recommendation.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that the ETB use the models and materials developed by EQAVET as guidance for the development of their QA work particularly in facilitating the development of a shared understanding of quality and a culture of quality self -assessment at learning practitioner level and at FET centre level.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Staff Recruitment

Observations

The ETB sets out its commitment “to the recruitment and retention of staff of the highest calibre, those who will provide the best quality teaching, learning opportunities and support services to all its learners in the fulfilment of their individual aspirations and objectives.” (SER p38)

As LCETB is a statutory body, its recruitment and selection policies and procedures are set out in directives from the Department of Education and comply with Irish law and public sector standards.

The report identified a key concern about “the programme-based rigidity around the deployment of resources, operational regulations, salary scales and the nature of some part-time employment contracts.” (SER p39)

The review team were given access to samples of the various contracts of employment relating to the appointment of learning practitioners. The ETB uses different contracts for three different types of learning practitioners – that is, tutors, teachers, and instructors. The contract type used is determined by rules and regulations governing entry requirements to each of these grades and terms and conditions established at national level. Appointment to a specific teaching grade relates to the type of programme and the location of the programme being provided. The limitations in the national contracts means that there is little flexibility in the allocation of workload, changing work practices and the release of staff for professional development. These issues can also be a barrier to recruitment and retention of industry experts and impact on the capability of the ETB to workforce plan.

Despite these contractual challenges, the ETB is clear about the characteristics it requires in a learning practitioner. It seeks to recruit suitably qualified learning practitioners who are empathetic towards learners and capable of delivering programmes through a variety of teaching methodologies to meet learning needs. It promotes good practice through induction training, ongoing CPD and the recent development of “communities of practice.” Communities of practice are opportunities for practitioners to come together to review materials and teaching methodologies in their fields of interest. These provide opportunities for learning practitioners to share their innovations, gain competence and confidence in their teaching methodologies to support the active inclusion of learners both within their programme and across programmes and departments.

The review team noted that the staff survey identified that only 29% of new staff attended induction training at corporate level (SER p43), which is likely to have an impact on the roll out of quality assurance policies. This is compensated for by the fact that local centres provide an induction programme for new staff.

Recommendations

- The ETB recognises that there needs to be a “more cohesive approach to staff induction (including corporate, FET and centre-level processes) should be prioritised.” (SER p50) and the review team supports this recommendation.
- The review team also recommends that the ETB expand its communities of practice for learning practitioners across its FET provision. This will provide the opportunity for best practice in teaching and learning to be exchanged among staff teaching similar programmes across different divisions of FET.

Staff Mentoring

Observations

The review team heard about good examples of mentoring systems in some FET centres for new learning practitioners. It was apparent that this good practice had developed on an ad hoc basis in some FET centres, but where it existed, it was an important support to new practitioners. Mentoring by an experienced learning practitioner enhances the induction of new staff and reinforces best practice at centre level. Mentors, where they exist, support new learning practitioners by explaining QA procedures, course descriptors, and indicative programme content for newly appointed staff. Overall, mentors have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning and contribute to establishing consistency in learner experience.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that a formal mentoring scheme be introduced at centre level for new learning practitioners in addition to the induction training provided at centre and central level and that a culture of collaboration among learning practitioners be developed further.

Staff Management

Observations

There is no performance management system in place in the ETB and no link made between staff performance and the KPIs set out in the ETB's strategic agreement with SOLAS. The ETB has stated that staff are provided with feedback on their work by their managers. FET managers lead teams comprising of full-time and part-time staff. They hold regular meetings to discuss strategic developments and operational issues. This "allows the FET Co-ordinators to cascade service-wide initiatives and provide information on all new developments. They are also an accessible way for staff to relay their feedback on operational issues." (SER p40)

The external authentication process is the only review of assessment and provides an opportunity for learning practitioners to obtain feedback on whether their learners have achieved the learning outcomes associated with their programmes. From the ETB staff survey, the review team notes that 46% of staff report that they always (and 31% sometimes) can discuss feedback from EAs with their FET Coordinator. This is consistent with the finding that 69% of FET Coordinators state that they regularly discuss feedback from EAs with staff. However, this is a limited opportunity for feedback given the percentage (average 20%) of modules reviewed in any given cycle.

The opportunity for staff to receive feedback from the EA is critical to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and should occur at centre level and centrally. This will require the ETB to examine ways of maximising the potential of EAs including increasing the number of modules reviewed in any certification period. In addition, the opportunity for staff in centres and across centres to discuss feedback is an opportunity to affirm good practice, innovative practices and develop consistency in assessment in the ETB.

Recommendations on enhancing the role of External Authentication are made in Section 2 b below.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

New Programme Development

Observations

The ETB has a strong governance structure in place to manage programme amendment and development. “All new programme development and centre delivery approval must be ratified by the Regional Planning Network prior to deliberation at the Quality Council sub-group (Programme Governance)” (SER p51) which in turn will make a recommendation to the Quality Council.

The review team saw examples of good practice in the ETB’s development of new programmes responding to the needs of the labour market; it was evident to the team that there was real engagement with employers in the development of the programmes. Two examples are presented here.

The National Hairdressing Apprenticeship

The National Hairdressing Apprenticeship was developed by a consortium of industry and education providers as a statutory apprenticeship governed by the Industrial Training Act 1967. LCETB is the co-ordinating provider and all of the other 15 ETBs have signed agreements as second providers enabling the apprenticeship programme to be delivered across the country. The apprenticeship is a minimum of three years’ duration with a ratio of 80:20 on-the-job/off-the-job centre-based and work-based training. Technology-enhanced learning (TEL) was integrated into the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship. The programme was developed with industry representatives and subject-matter experts and was validated by QQI as a major award at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Aircraft Painting Course

The second example is the development of an Aircraft Painting Course. This programme was developed in partnership with an aeronautical company. The programme was designed to develop the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment entry requirements for this specialist role. The ETB examined certification options and determined that City and Guilds had the programme descriptor that best suited their needs. The programme was developed by the ETB and validated by City and Guilds. The review team met the employer as part of this review, and it was clear that many learners completing the programme were being employed in the industry.

In these examples, employers were very complimentary about the engagement of the ETB and their efforts to respond to their requirements. Other employers spoke of the efforts made by the ETB to tailor existing programmes to respond to their needs.

What also emerged in the interviews with staff, employers and the FET support services is the length of time involved in the development and validation of a programme irrespective of the accrediting body. Employers made it clear to the review team that the time required is detrimental to meeting their needs. The review team is of the view that this timeframe makes it difficult for the ETB to be flexible in their response to labour market changes and employer demands.

However, the review team recognised that there are also other factors to be considered in developing new programmes. Employers need to be consulted to ensure programme proposals are relevant and modern and will lead directly to employment. The new programme also needs to be balanced with quality and academic integrity and create progression pathways for learners beyond the immediate job being proposed by employers. Consequently, the review team is of the opinion that higher education should also be consulted in the development of some new programmes as the input of representatives from higher education would be invaluable to course development and would also strengthen the link with the academic and skill requirements for progression to third level.

Most programmes delivered by ETBs have been developed by ETBs under the QQI Common Awards Scheme (CAS). “For CAS awards, a significant proportion of the programme design has been determined by QQI (e.g. QQI has specified the minimum expected learning outcomes...; the structure; progression arrangements; assessment requirements; and estimated learner effort).” (Quality in Irish Further Education and Training QQI Insights 2019 p12) An ETB can change a small number of optional modules in an award, but this has meant that ETBs have little flexibility when using CAS awards to change the modules contained in the award or the content of programmes. While the CAS structure will not be changed by QQI, there are new opportunities for non-CAS submissions.

in 2016 QQI introduced “Policies and Procedures for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training”. In this new policy, QQI adopted a broader approach to the specification standards for new awards. This new validation policy provides greater flexibility for ETBs in developing new programmes, but it is a detailed process. Providers must demonstrate how proposed programmes satisfy a range of criteria on the objectives, design, and management of programmes; the appropriateness and sufficiency of staffing and physical resources; and the suitability of the learning environment and arrangements in respect of learners.

It was clear in the discussion with the ETB that programme development and validation can be a robust, demanding and resource-intensive process as illustrated by the development of the Hairdressing Apprenticeship programme as set out in the case study in the SER (p137). Many of the staff involved in developing new programmes have teaching responsibilities and the developmental support for such programmes requires considerable investment by the quality assurance staff. The development of a new programme puts considerable pressure on limited existing resources. The review team noted that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) had QA systems in place under a delegated authority from QQI that allows them to validate their own new programmes. This should be considered as a long-term objective for the ETB sector. Consideration should be given by the ETB to taking a leadership role in exploring the possibility of the sector taking on more responsibility for all aspects of the validation process under devolved responsibility, as a medium-term approach.

Commendation

The review team commend the ETB on the development of the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship Programme at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications in collaboration with other key stakeholders.

Recommendation

The review team encourages the ETB to progress or lead in the implementation of their own recommendation: “discussion at national level to streamline validation requirements processes with QQI” (p55), and initiative discussions with key stakeholders.

Challenges in relation to Existing Programmes

Observations

LCETB is facing several significant challenges in respect of their existing stock of validated programmes. The ETB was formed in 2013 with the merger of three VECs and the subsequent integration in 2014 of two FÁS training centres which had been managed by SOLAS. This means that the ETB has a portfolio of validated programmes from levels 1 to 6 that it has inherited from the three VECs and from the validated ex-FÁS programmes operating in the training centres.

The first challenge relates to existing programmes provided in the training centres. These programmes were developed in the FÁS Curriculum Unit in the years prior to its closure in 2014. It became clear from interviews that a considerable number of programmes operating in the training centres and, to a lesser extent, in further education provision, need to be updated as a matter of

urgency. Industry representatives, learners and learning practitioners reported that some of the content was significantly dated and no longer relevant to the knowledge and skills required in the labour market. This is a considerable challenge for the ETB and poses a risk to its reputation and capacity to deliver relevant programmes.

In addition, many of the assessment instruments associated with the programmes provided in the training centres are dated. The review team recognises that the ETB has collaborated with other ETBs through ETBI to address this issue and a number of assessment instruments have been updated.

The review team were also made aware by learners that the content of some of the craft apprenticeship programmes were dated; the review team stresses the ETB's responsibility to address this in collaboration with SOLAS.

It is recognised that LCETB is working with other ETBs to address this issue, and this is commendable. However, the review team is of the strong opinion that to continue to deliver outdated programmes to significant numbers of learners may impact on the learners and their progression opportunities and could pose a reputational risk to the organisation. Addressing this issue should be prioritised as a matter of urgency.

Commendations

- The review team commends the ETB's commitment to "contribute to shared curriculum review and development initiatives at national level to ensure that FET provision is relevant, up-to-date and recognised." (SER p55).
- The review team commends the ETB on its collaborative approach to the development of new programmes with other ETBs and external stakeholders and recognises that for the ETB to manage the updating of its existing programmes in an efficient and effective manner continued collaboration with ETBs and external stakeholders will be critical.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the ETB undertake an audit of existing legacy programmes in FET to identify the programmes that require updating.
- The review team recommends that the ETB give consideration to seeking the resources required to speed up the process of reviewing and revising existing programmes and outdated AISs.

Observations

The second challenge is an overlap in a number of programmes at levels 1-4 (NFQ) that originated in the three VECs. The review team is of the view that these programmes should be reviewed, with one programme subsequently being implemented across the three ETB regions.

In addition, learning practitioners reported that they only have access to the programmes originally validated for their own region, i.e., County Limerick, Limerick City or County Clare. This is a task that the ETB should address as a matter of urgency as the current situation – where different versions of the same programme are delivered in different regions – undermines consistency in provision for learners. In the short term the barriers to providing the best programmes across internal divisions should be considered and overcome.

The ETB recognises that the need to replace “dual curriculum with single curriculum across further education and training is a priority” (SER p55) and the review team supports this priority. Given the significant challenges facing the ETB in both addressing the legacy issues with the existing stock of programmes and the level of resources required to develop new programmes, consideration should be given to seeking the resources required to focus on these tasks as a priority as this would speed up the process of reviewing and revising existing programmes.

Finally, the review team recognises the vital role played by non-certified programmes at community level; these programmes meet the development needs of learners and act as a gateway to further education and training. The review team advise the ETB to focus on developing models for measuring their learning outcomes. These non-certified programmes should continue to be flexible enough to respond to learner needs.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the further education programmes associated with the three defunct VECs should be streamlined into one set of programmes that can be delivered across the three ETB regions.
- The review team recommends that more consideration be given when prioritising the development of new programmes like apprenticeships, which by their nature are resource intensive, while existing outdated programmes continue to be delivered.
- The review team recommends that the ETB work in collaboration with other ETBs and SOLAS on developing new ways of measuring learning outcomes (other than certification) associated with non-certified programmes.

Access, Transfer and Progression

Access

Observations

Access and progression is the first strategic goal in LCETB's FET Strategic Framework. It is defined as “supporting learners to access and sustain participation in education and training and to progress in key aspects of their lives, personal development, further education and/or employment.” (p56)

The ETB has implemented a number of strategies to support the access of potential learners to courses. The ETB has provided a centralised course list and enquiry system through the website www.learningandskills.ie and a centralised Freephone number and a course enquiry email for potential learners.

The ETB is seeking to embed information and guidance in all FET provision with limited resources, using flexible models of delivery depending on the programmes provided. The aim is to make available information and guidance support at the pre-entry, induction, ongoing pre-exist and post-exit stages. A wide range of strategies are used such as class drop-in, one-to-one guidance, group guidance, online information, information hubs, notice boards in all FET centres, and social media with dedicated FET information. The evidence from the learner survey and from the review team's interviews with learners confirms that this is a critical support service and is valued by learners.

Progression Pathways

Observations

The FET Division promotes learner progression within FET to higher education and employment. The review team saw evidence that learners can progress from gateway programmes in community education into certified programmes at NFQ Levels 3 and 4. There are also clear pathways from full-time level 4 programmes such as Youthreach/CTCs into apprenticeships in culinary arts, construction, accounting, and hairdressing. There are also clear pathways from level 4 programmes to PLC courses at levels 5 and 6. All of these level 5 and 6 programmes have pathway statements into employment and higher education.

The ETB has negotiated local progression agreements for entry level with Limerick Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology. Advanced entry progression agreements with Institute of Technology Tralee (now MTU) and LIT for entry into year 2 of specific programmes on

completion of specific level 6 programmes are also in place. (SER p60). It was reported to the review team by HEI representatives that there was further scope for the expansion of the progression agreements, but work would need to be undertaken to track learning outcomes at level 5 and 6 programmes to learning outcomes of particular programmes in the HEIs.

One of the stated priorities is to “enhance progression tracking mechanisms to fully reflect learners’ outcomes and promote FET as a valuable option to Higher Education and employment for learners and employers” (FET Strategic Framework p61). While this is important data for management to collect and review LCETB report that the current tracking system included in the PLSS is not working effectively and the way in which data is collected by the ETB is not consistent across the division. A new tracking system is being developed to demonstrate progression routes to CAO and Apprenticeships/Traineeships.

It was not clear to the review team what data relating to access, transfer, progression and participation should be collected and reviewed and what impact, if any, this data will have on the review of the performance of centres. It is clear from discussion on the data collected that the current system has limitations (see section h below) and needs to be improved to ensure that the data is collected and recorded in a consistent manner across the FET Division.

Recommendation

The review team recognises that progression pathways are critical to learners’ ambitions and recommends that these be further developed. To advance the development of progression pathways to higher education, the review team recommends that the ETB consider appointing a single point of contact for HEIs in relation to collaboration.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

Observations

The FET Division has detailed quality assurance policies and procedures in place to support the integrity of learner assessment and results and to support consistent decision-making and standards across the services and centres’ programmes. The policies and procedures include assessment policy and procedures, internal verification and external authentication processes, results approval panels and an appeal procedure. These policies are supported by a significant programme of professional development for staff.

The FET Division has created a Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS) to support the development and implementation of the QA policies and procedures across FET provision.

The QASS has put in place a number of strategies to support the integrity of learner assessment and results and seeks to provide consistent decision-making and standards across services and centres. These include:

- A programme of professional development seeking to ensure that all staff receive consistent messages on standards, briefs, marking schemes, feedback procedures through the external authenticators.
- The establishment of template forms, a bank of exemplars on agreed assessments and marking schemes.
- Training for internal verifiers in each centre.
- Training and guidelines for external authenticators.
- Appeals procedures for learners.
- Centralising the Result Approval Panel (SER p64).

Internal Verification

The internal verification (IV) process is carried out at centre level and “checks that assessments have been carried out in accordance with procedures, using correct assessment instruments, learner details and results are correctly calculated and entered, etc.” (SER p81). At the time of the review visit, operating in the face of public health restrictions, the review team heard that LCETB was reviewing 100% of materials as part of the IV process and the review team notes that this is good practice under these circumstances.

External Verification

The role of the EA is “to review IV reports to ensure that assessments have been carried out in a fair and consistent manner and to authenticate that the grades given are in line with national standards for that level”. (SER p81). This is achieved by the EA examining a percentage of the modules completed.

LCETB has introduced new arrangements to centrally recruit and appoint external authenticators and this was described during the main review visit by centre management, staff and the QASS team as a positive development. The EA process is critical to ensuring a consistency of assessment and in providing an external view of the assessment of learning outcomes. The rationale for centralising the management of the EA process is described by the ETB as seeking to enable a more consistent approach to the role of EAs. It provides the QASS with the information to review IV and EA reports for

all centres and to provide feedback to the centres on an annual basis. This data is also provided to the Quality Council for review. (More about this process in Section 2 b below).

The review team notes from the staff survey findings that 46% of staff report that they always (and 31% sometimes) can discuss feedback from EAs. The review team further notes that in Limerick College of Further Education; because of the number of learners (1,100) at the college, it continues to have the EAs undertake their reviews on site, and this enables feedback to staff in real time.

The external authentication process provides a limited opportunity for feedback given the % of modules reviewed in any given certification cycle (average 20%).

For example, the following table setting out the number of portfolios externally examined in the June and July certification period 2020 was presented in the QA newsletter (October 2020).

Region	No. of portfolios	No. of portfolios EA-ed	% of portfolios	No. of grade changes	No. of appeals
Limerick College of Further Education	6082	1080	17.7%	11	38
LCFE Evening provision	1,122	307	27%	0	5
County Clare FET Colleges/ Centres	1354	406	30%	4	5
County Limerick FET Colleges/Centres	827	203	24.5%	2	0
Limerick City FET Centres	756	259	34%	0	0
FET Raheen Campus	126	0	0	0	0
FET Shannon Campus	76	0	0	0	0
Limerick Community Education Network centres	213	41	19%	1	0
Total	10,556	2,296	21.7%	18	48

This shows that, on average, 21% of modules are externally authenticated and – in these two certification periods – none of the 202 modules provided in the two training centres (Shannon and Raheen) were externally authenticated in these certification cycles.

Given that the external authentication process is the only external review of assessments and the grading of work, consideration should be given to the possibility of increasing the percentage of assessments reviewed. Consideration should also be given to externally authenticating modules from each centre presenting for certification. In addition, the current use of an EA to review the same modules across a number of centres could be expanded as it contributes to the ETB's objective of establishing a consistency among the same modules across a number of centres.

Detailed recommendations in respect of external authentication are made under Objective 2 b Assessment of Learning below.

The QASS recognises that this centralised external authentication process is new and needs further refinement. There should be more consistency in the content of the EA reports; this would assist the QASS and centre staff to identify issues that need to be addressed. The QASS should also establish a more effective process for securing a more timely explanation of the assessment feedback from the EA to the learning practitioner.

Results Approval Panel (RAP)

In 2019 a new single-version of the ETB FET Division Results Approval Panel (RAP) was managed centrally to ensure that results are fully quality assured and signed off by the Provider prior to submission to QQI.

Prior to this, RAPs were conducted at centre level and the changes have been commended by staff and management as an important development. The report of the RAP is analysed by the QASS and a report is provided to the Quality Council.

Learner Appeals Process

The QASS manages the appeal process which enables learners to appeal their results. The terms and conditions and application procedures are set out in the External Appeals Process Handbook and provide an opportunity for an external assessor to review the marking of a particular assessment. The

procedures are in line with QQI Guidelines. The ETB provided the review team with data on the number of appeals for the June and July 2020 certification period; the data indicated that a total of 48 appeals were submitted (to put this figure in context, a total of 10,543 modules were presented for certification).

Information and Data Management

Observations

QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines identify the need for controls and structures to be put in place to generate named data/reports which are communicated to staff and management for self-monitoring and planning purposes.

The ETB uses the PLSS system web-based portal developed by SOLAS, which incorporates the National Learner Database, a national course calendar and a companion course finder as well as an online application system. The PLSS is now used as the primary learner management information system and the integration of the system across FET provision is managed by a FET manager. The system facilitates granular and controlled access across FET provision including partner groups.

In addition, a new system (Sytorus) enables the ETB's compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) introduced by the European Union in 2018. All FET centres use the new system to ensure compliance with the GDPR data protection policies and procedures. In addition, "An online GDPR course has been developed and is compulsory for all FET Staff. As with all centrally-organised PD, the programme is digitally-badged enabling tracking of completion." (SER p68)

The SER states that "[o]ne of the key challenges identified with PLSS is its lack of some functionality. PLSS does not yet capture historical data for learners that former MIS provided. It focuses on provision management, rather than learner management information (what a learner does, at what time, certification, etc.)." (p70)

While the PLSS has its limitations, other data is provided annually by QQI that gives the organisation details of the levels of certification and compares grades with national trends. Data from the IV, EA and results approval processes are also collected and used by the QASS to review the performance of individual centres. (This will be addressed later in this report.)

Data from learner surveys are collected in some centres at the end of each course but not systematically collected across all FET provision and not reviewed at central level or considered as part of the review of data compiled by the QASS in preparing for their annual centre review. The review team advises that there should be a stronger emphasis on the evaluation of courses by learners as a valid source of feedback and performance review. It was clear from learners whom the review team met that the relationship with the learner practitioner was critical to their achievement of their learning goals. It was also clear that end-of-year evaluations were in place but the opportunity for learners to give feedback in real time was limited or non-existent.

Learner feedback should be formally captured as one of the metrics for measuring quality and the feedback should have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning at centre level. The review team believe that formal evaluation processes should occur at classroom level on a number of occasions during a programme's delivery and should be in place across the FET Division. This will allow for issues arising to be addressed by the learning practitioner in real time.

In addition, learner evaluations should be included in each centre's self-evaluation process and in evaluation meetings with the QASS.

In conclusion, the review team is of the view that the systematic use of data to drive evidence-based decision-making was not fully demonstrated in the SER or during the main review visit. Meetings with staff at all levels during the review visit revealed a lack of ready access to relevant and timely data sets to inform decision-making at centre or central level. There is no data set that supports discussions on learner retention, progression, achievement, and destination.

The review team is of the opinion that it is essential that the ETB move to a position where data is used right across the organisation to inform decision-making. Such use of data will also enable the organisation to effectively review its performance against its strategic goals.

It should be noted that target setting and measurement of performance against targets was introduced by SOLAS as part of the Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-2020 with LCETB. The KPIs established by this process were negotiated with the ETB and measurement of performance will impact on the funding available to LCETB in the future. This reinforces the need for the ETB sector to improve its data collection and management. It should be noted that, in the recent performance review undertaken by SOLAS (2021), LCETB performed well and – in many cases – exceeded the targets set.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that there be a stronger emphasis on the evaluation of courses by learners as a valid source of feedback and performance review and that this data be collected in a timely manner at periods during course delivery to allow for an impact on the learner experience.
- The review team recommends that the ETB establish clear mechanisms to capture learner feedback in a consistent manner at class level across FET provision.
- The review team recommends that the ETB seek ways of enhancing their systems for managing learner data.
- The review team recommends that the ETB develop the critical data required to monitor the effectiveness of non-certified programmes. This new data should inform the decision making of the organisation at centre and central level.

Public Information and Communication

Observations

In the interests of public confidence in standards, openness and transparency, the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require organisations to publish information about their activities and programmes which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible (Section 1.8).

The information should include:

- Selection criteria for admission to programmes
- The intended learning outcomes of programmes
- The qualifications awarded
- The teaching, learning and assessment procedures
- The pass rates
- The learning opportunities available to students
- Graduate employment information

LCETB's website provides information and links to its key publications, policies, and procedures in relation to capital and procurement, recruitment, governance structures, data protection, complaints procedure and appeals. LCETB is committed to meeting the requirements of Freedom of Information (2014) which requires bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis (SER p70). The FET Division has a website (www.learningandskills.ie) and this is updated on an ongoing basis so that the public and stakeholders can easily access relevant information. A specific quality assurance page provides information on each of the 11 areas of quality assurance, with links to QA policies, procedures, and

forms, as well as information on QA management and governance, including the minutes of meetings, handbooks, and QA newsletters.

The ETB has established a marketing/external communications unit, which manages the ETB's communication strategy across various social media platforms, as well as ensuring a consistency in the look and feel of all of its publications.

The review team recognises that the ETB's rebranding and communications strategy has been successful in enhancing its profile across the region.

The StaffConnect is a valuable resource to all staff. The QA Newsletter to staff (also available to the public on the website) is particularly important in providing details on the progress being made across the centres and on future developments.

Commendation

The review team commends the ETB for its openness and transparent approach to making information available to the public and to its internal and external stakeholders.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that the ETB continue to be proactive in developing an open and transparent approach to making information available to the public, and its internal and external stakeholders. It is important that as the use of data is improved to measure the outcomes of its programmes, the ETB publish the outcomes of these processes.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The review team was provided with access to all QA documents and met with learners, learning practitioners, partner providers and FET centre managers across the ETB's FET provision to review the QA procedures in respect of teaching, learning and assessment. The review team also noted the role played by the Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS) in the process. Indeed, the QASS plays a critical role in embedding and supporting a learner-centred culture in the organisation.

The Learning Environment: Physical Infrastructure

Observations

The ETB has 28 FET centres/ college in its portfolio. Many of these centres are old facilities and schools and have been converted into FET centres. The LCETB FET Strategic Plan 2015-2020 sets a strategic objective to “ensure ETB FET learners have access to welcoming, safe and fit-for-purpose learning environments”. (SER p75)

The review team did not have the opportunity to visit any of the centres within LCETB, given that this review was undertaken remotely. However, the ETB provided several videos to the review team to provide members with an impression of the physical learning environments across the ETB's FET provision. Over the last few years, the ETB has made significant investments in a number of their centres to upgrade the physical infrastructure and equipment. This includes new kitchens, ICT labs, science labs, canteens and workshops. Classrooms now include interactive whiteboards, laptops, projectors, and other devices.

ETB management has also adopted a colour scheme and branding framework to establish a corporate image across FET provision. This has been facilitated by the introduction of a capital grant scheme by SOLAS and there is a commitment by SOLAS to expand this grant scheme in the coming years.

Commendation

The review team commends the commitment of the ETB's senior management to the upgrading of the ETB's existing centres as continuous investment in facilities and resources contributes to the creation of excellent learning environments.

Teaching and Learning

The commitment to “a learner-centred, holistic and tailored [approach]” (SER p75) to the needs of learners, was strongly articulated by staff and reflected in the review team’s dialogue with learners. This is further affirmed by the learner surveys in which “92% of learners agreed that they have a good relationship with their teachers/tutors, 86% were aware that bullying is not tolerated by staff and 82% of learners agreed wellbeing was actively promoted in their FET Centre.” (Learners’ Consultations Report 2020 p5) Samples of the external authenticator reports confirm the quality of teaching and learning in both part-time and full-time provision. (SER p128-134)

This commitment to learners is reinforced by the decision of the ETB to promote the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across the FET Division to reduce barriers to learning and increase access to equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream teaching environment, including for learners with disabilities.

The review team saw examples of this good practice across a variety of programmes. Two examples of good practice were identified in two different settings, the Equine Breeding programme and the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship. Both these programmes were designed in line with UDL principles and implemented UDL guidelines where the delivery of content and assessment briefs were tailored to meet learning needs.

Commendation

The review team commends the ETB staff and management on their commitment to providing a quality learning environment and promoting and supporting a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that the ETB continue to develop case studies setting out exemplars of good practice using existing systems to further disseminate these to learning practitioners across the FET Division.

Secondary Providers of Further Education and Training

Observations

The ETB also delivers programmes through partnerships with community providers and through contracted private companies that deliver specialist training programmes. There are two forms of community provision, which are based on the legacy systems of FÁS and the VECs.

The FÁS legacy procedures provide funding to community training centres, local training initiatives and specialist training providers, such as the National Learning Network, which are all separate legal entities. These organisations submit an annual plan with KPIs and budgets and are approved to deliver LCETB programmes under the Transitional Quality Assurance Scheme (TQAS). The organisations report to the ETB on the progression of learners against the KPIs and report on finance on a quarterly basis. These procedures are reported by the organisations as working well. The QA procedures and assessment instruments are provided directly through the Training Standards Officer. These programmes and AISs are the legacy programmes from the former FÁS and, during the main review visit, the review team heard that these providers felt that they are dated.

The second form of community providers is those operating under the QA procedures of the ETB. The Limerick City Community Education Network represents seven independent community providers who provide a range of certified and non-certified programmes at levels 1 - 6. These groups were recognised by QQI as certified centres with their own QA policies and procedures. Because of the challenges involved for small providers in completing the re-engagement requirements with QQI, the Network entered into an agreement with the ETB to allow it to operate under the ETB's QA policies and procedures. In this arrangement, which is covered by an MoU, the organisations manage the delivery of programmes to meet the needs of their communities using the ETB tutors and programmes with locally devised assessment instruments.

All community partners reported that they were happy with their relationship with the ETB which they found to be supportive and positive.

Some minor issues were identified by the interviewees: first, they objected to the term 'second provider' as they felt that it does not adequately recognise their role as partners of the ETB in delivering community education. Secondly, while the tutors are ETB employees and could access all relevant policies and procedures through StaffConnect, managers of community education centres could not access the documents because they are not ETB staff.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the ETB examine the possibility of opening a portal to enable all staff of community providers to access policy and procedures documents and templates.

Learner Feedback

Observations

It was evident during the review team's meetings with learners that they have a great appreciation of the learning opportunities provided by the ETB and the commitment of staff to supporting them in achieving their learning objectives. The review team also heard that the information that these learners received in advance of commencing their programmes was consistent with the programme content. The learners also indicated that the ETB sets out clearly the progression routes available to them once they have completed the programme.

Feedback from learners across multiple programmes about the importance of their relationship with their learning practitioner and the vital role they played in their learning journey was consistent. The review team noted the commitment of the staff to a learner-centred approach and to adapting their teaching methodologies to meet the learning needs of their learners.

While the learner/learner-practitioner relationship is important in the context of capturing the learner voice, the review team noted that a variety of methods is used across the centres to capture the learner voice. This can be through informal feedback encouraged by a learning practitioner, learner surveys during and or after the course, or more formal structures such as the student council in Limerick College of Further Education with student representation on the college's board of management. LCETB also supports AONTAS' facilitation of an annual Learner Forum with learners drawn from across FET provision. The FET Division considers the feedback contained in the report from AONTAS.

However, the review team concluded that the approach to capturing the learner voice at class level across FET provision is not consistent. There is an end-of-year evaluation in many centres and there is a reliance on the relationship between learning practitioner and learner to enable the learner to raise issues in real time. This certainly limits the opportunity for the learner to give feedback on the programme content and the quality of the teaching input in real time that would allow for changes to be made to their programme. It also means that learner feedback is not used as an essential part of evaluation of provision at centre or central level.

Outside of the annual AONTAS Learner Forum, there is no collection of learner feedback at central level and, therefore, learner feedback plays little or no role in the formal review of the performance of centres.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the ETB establish clear mechanisms to capture learner feedback in a consistent manner at class level across its FET provision. Learner evaluations should also be included in the centre's self-evaluation process and in the evaluation meetings with the QASS.
- The review team recommends that the ETB explore more structured learner engagement and representation at centre level as this would give more ownership to learners and more responsibility to the ETB to respond to the matters raised.

Assessment of Learners

Observations

The merger of the three VECs in 2013 and the integration of two of the former FÁS training centres in 2014 resulted in the new ETB having seven QA systems in operation. The stated objective for the ETB is to move to one quality assurance system and – while considerable progress has been made in introducing some new common QA policies and procedures across FET provision – the ETB has not yet achieved this objective. In particular, there are two legacy QA systems, one model arising from the VECs and a very different QA system arising from the former FÁS training centres. The difference in QA systems is particularly relevant to the assessment of learners where there are two different assessment systems in place at present. LCETB described the assessment systems in supplementary information provided to the review team as follows:

Training Centre Curriculum

The former FÁS training centres continue to operate under the Transitional Quality Assurance System (TQAS), which is based on a system where the assessment instruments are developed centrally for all programmes and provided to instructors through the Training Standards Officer. Second providers originally funded by FÁS (such as CTCs, LTIs, and STPs such as the National Learning Network) continue to operate under the TQAS.

SOLAS ceased to house the former FÁS training curriculum and assessments (AISs) and transferred these to ETBI in 2020. The QASS then needed to transfer all relevant programmes and AISs to the

ETB Moodle site. In the supplementary documentation provided to the review team, the ETB states that it is currently downloading and editing AISs, updating logos, formats and editing to ensure that the QA references conform with the LCETB QA assessment procedures and regulations. The two FET centres in Raheen and Shannon can now request updates to AISs and this process and version control is managed by the QASS. Priority is being given to dealing with AISs currently being delivered and the remainder will be addressed over a longer schedule (QA Newsletter No 7 October 2020 p15).

The use of dated AISs and legacy and dated programmes continues to impact on the integrity of the assessments and on the outcomes for learners and continues to pose a risk to the ETB. This issue was detailed in Section 3 (e).

The recent engagement of a specific QASS officer with the management of the training centres was described by their management as a very positive development in beginning to align the Transitional Quality Assurance System (TQAS) with the new QA procedures. It was identified as likely to be a slow process given the strong union representation, with changes in work practices needing negotiation at national level. This process can only begin when the ETB decides on the future of AISs in the training centres.

Further Education Curriculum

In the former VECs, assessment instruments were developed by learning practitioners for their own programmes or modules. The challenge for the ETB in using locally-devised assessment instruments (AIs) on common modules across multiple centres is ensuring that the AIs are appropriate to measure the learning outcomes, and that the marking schemes are consistent across the various courses. The learning practitioner has autonomy in developing the teaching and learning resources, setting local internal formative and summative assessments and grading learning results. It is very clear that consistency of assessment is considered an area of critical importance and continues to inform the QASS priorities. QASS has focused on providing support to learning practitioners through CPD and the development of assessment templates, new assessment procedures and exemplars of sample briefs and marking schemes. This is an important strategy that should be expanded. While these developments are important, the only point at which are checked is during the EA process, which is limited to a sample system.

The review team notes that both existing assessment systems have their risks and challenges for the ETB. When asked, the senior management team reported that no decision has been made as to whether a centrally devised or locally devised assessment system, or a blended version, will form the

basis of the new integrated QA policy and procedures. Further, no timeframe was provided to the review team for determination of this matter.

The review team considers that a decision needs to be made in the near future on how assessment instruments will be developed. This decision will inform the strategic development of the QA policy and procedures and the professional development needs of staff most affected by the decision. The review team also noted that – while the ETB has made a commitment to moving to one QA system in the SER – no reference was made to the need for a decision on the future form of assessment instruments – nor was this critical decision identified in the quality assurance continuous improvement plans for the past three years.

In September 2019, LCETB introduced eight new assessments procedures covering the following:

- Assessment malpractice
- Compassionate consideration procedures
- Short-term extension procedures
- Reasonable accommodations in assessment procedures
- Appeals procedures
- Recognition of prior learning procedure
- Examination procedure
- Secure storage procedure

These policies were developed through a national collaboration process with the ETBs, which was co-ordinated by ETBI. LCETB engaged in local consultation and modified the policies to meet their needs. The new policies came into effect for all FET centres in September 2020 and for Limerick College of Further Education in Sept 2021.

While a decision is being made on the model for the development of assessment instruments, the weaknesses of both models need to be addressed and governance strengthened. Options for strengthening the locally devised assessment system that should be considered include:

- The introduction of a process for the peer review of assessment briefs at centre level thus supporting and strengthening consistency at centre level.
- EAs to work across centres on thematic areas to collect data on the consistency of assessment briefs and marking schemes between centres.
- Increase the sampling strategy for EAs in the short term to enable the organisation to be more assured about the consistency of the assessment of learners.

- Develop a simple IT system to reduce the errors in grade calculation during the completion of grades for learners and IV process.

Commendations

The review team commends the ETB on the:

- Development of exemplars of assessment evidence, briefs and marking schemes.
- Centralising of the recruitment and briefing of EAs to establish consistency in EA reports, and the collection of data from EA reports relevant to the review of the programmes in centres.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that:

- The ETB reach a decision on the future of the assessment system in the near future, as that decision will inform the strategic direction of the QA policies and procedures in respect of assessment and give direction to staff development requirements.
- The ETB strengthen the role of the EAs in monitoring consistency of assessment and ensure effective and timely feedback to learning practitioners.
- THE ETB address the legacy outdated assessment instruments currently operating under the TQAS.
- The current communities of practice be expanded to provide further opportunity for learning practitioners to obtain peer support and to review their own work against shared standards.

Supports for Learners

Observations

The FET learners in the ETB are a diverse group spanning age groups, previous educational backgrounds, cultural heritage, current circumstances, and personal disposition (SER p86). LCETB offers a range of learner supports which reflect the diversity of the learner base to support them on their individual learning journeys. There has been a history of learner supports, but these tended to be linked to specific programmes such as Youthreach, PLCs and literacy services. In recent years, the ETB has been more systematic in its approach to planning and managing support services to learners.

In 2018, the FET Division established the **Active Inclusion Support Service** to promote activation in blackspot areas. The focus was changed in 2020 from specific target groups such as Travellers,

vulnerable migrants, and people with disabilities to providing support to all learners across the ETB's FET provision. A centralised registration process for learners has been established to "ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, all FET learners are provided with the supports they need during their learning to fully participate and benefit from their learning journey with the ETB." (SER p87) FET coordinators and guidance staff are encouraged to support learners to use the simple registration facility. The allocation of support services to learners is then managed centrally and a fully integrated service with close communication between AISS staff and learning practitioners across programmes is provided. A learner support brochure is available to explain the registration process. Upon registration, a review is undertaken with the learner as to what supports are needed and specific supports for the individual learner are then provided.

In addition, the ETB is embedding information and guidance in all FET provision through a dedicated **Information, Recruitment and Guidance Support Service (IRGSS)**. The aim is to make available information and guidance support at the pre-entry, induction, ongoing, and post-course stages. A wide range of strategies are used – these include class drop-in, one-to-one guidance, group guidance, online information, information hubs, notice boards in all FET centres, and social media with a dedicated FET information, recruitment, and guidance Facebook page (SER p88). The evidence from learner surveys and interviews with learners confirms that this is a critical support service and is valued by the learners. It was reported by learners with whom the review team met that not all centres had access to guidance counsellors. One manager of one local FET centre expressed the desire for guidance counsellors to be allocated to centres and to visit and develop a profile with young people.

Technology-Enhanced Learning: The role of the TEL Support Service came into its own with the sudden closure of face-to-face classes and the move to online teaching and learning across the full range of education and training provision in the ETB in March 2020.

The ETB had a rapid response to the changing climate of Covid-19, distributing over 500 devices to learners through a digital device lending scheme; the ETB also provided training. In addition, over 280 devices were provided to staff, together with appropriate training in digital teaching and learning to enhance their digital and pedagogical skills and competences.

International Opportunities: The ETB has an average of 30 learners participating in the Erasmus programme annually in Spain and France; these learners largely come from two programmes at level 5. The ETB might consider exploring the possibility of increasing the opportunities for international / EU projects to develop and support staff, managers, learning practitioners and learners.

Continuous Professional Development: The ETD provides a significant range of CPD opportunities to staff, providing online courses and support particularly in blended learning, quality assurance. The introduction of an induction programme for newly appointed learning practitioners is an important development and while – currently – 29% of new learning practitioners have participated in the induction programme, this can be improved. As already discussed above, in some instances, centres have in place a mentoring programme for new staff.

Examples of good practice identified across the support services include:

- The development of communities of practice is a very important initiative – not just as a support for staff, but as a vehicle to promote good practice and learner practitioner development.
- The adoption of the Universal Design for Learning in the ETB's strategic plan to be promoted across all FET provision is to be commended.
- The effort to raise awareness of learners about the services available through brochures and videos.
- The digital device lending scheme is a significant support to learners and has had a significant impact.
- The training of staff in the learning hubs to identify learning needs at an early stage has been a significant development in enabling the provision of critical support services to learners.
- A guidance forum to enable staff across FET provision to meet and share best practice.
- Dedicated guidance and counselling staff assigned to Youthreach, Limerick College of Further Education and Asylum Centres.
- A holistic service is offered to learners who benefit from the shared support of the services including digital learning and support.
- The introduction of the digital badge for staff.
- The collaboration of the Active Social Inclusion Service and the CPD unit to provide upskilling to teaching staff on addressing learner needs in the classroom.
- The collaboration between FET TEL and PD support units ensured a coordinated approach to upskilling learning practitioners particularly as blended learning was used extensively during the Covid-19 response.
- Support staff are proactive – they visit the classroom and actively promote their services.
- Booklets and videos to help with academic writing and referencing are valuable to learners.
- Staff actively seek feedback from learners to determine additional services and evaluate services received.

Commendations

- The review team commends the ETB's strategy to develop a range of separate support services to support both learners and learning practitioners and on the examples of innovative practice presented to the review team. In particular, the collaboration between the services ensures that there is a co-ordinated and targeted response to the needs of learners and learning practitioners.
- The review team commends the commitment of the senior management team to a systematic approach to supporting the quality of learner experience through its administration procedures and the support structures it has put in place.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the ETB ensure that the support provided to vulnerable learners by the guidance counsellors continues to be prioritised given the increasing number of such learners enrolling on its programmes.
- The review team recommends that the ETB explore the development of an internationalisation strategy to expand opportunities for international / EU projects to develop support staff, managers, learning practitioners and learners.

Employer Engagement

Employers are important partners in the learning journey. They provide much needed work experience and work placement opportunities and provide supervision and feedback to the learner. Employers also partner with the ETB in programme review and development, participating as members of programme boards for new programmes and providing expert input on existing programmes.

Employers can also be the consumers of education and training services for their staff. LCETB delivers phase 2 training to apprentices as collaborating provider to SOLAS National Craft Apprenticeships in areas such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, motor mechanics. The ETB are also a collaborating provider for some of the new apprenticeships, e.g., Accounting Technician and Commis Chef.

Other programmes made available to employers for their employees include Skills to Advance and targeted interventions addressing literacy, numeracy, and digital skills development.

Representatives from industry commended the ETB on its responsiveness to their needs.

The ETB has developed an Enterprise Engagement Framework 2017-2020 and reconfigured staff roles to enable the formation of a dedicated Enterprise Engagement Support Service (EESS). The EESS provides a central point of contact for enterprises to broker the range of FET provision to employers. The team plays a key role in enterprise networks such as the Regional Skills Forum, SICAP, local development companies, LEO, chambers of commerce and county councils. This has had a significant impact on raising the profile of LCETB and in enabling it to respond to the training needs of employers within the limits imposed by programme restrictions.

The support provided to industry in the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships and the active participation of the EESS in enterprise networks was commended by the companies and stakeholders interviewed by the review team.

Commendation

The review team commends the ETB on the establishment of the Enterprise Engagement Support Service and its work in raising the profile of the ETB by playing a leading role in regional employer networks and in co-ordinating the ETB's response to employer needs.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Observations

The ETB has developed a strategic statement for the period 2017-21, which sets out its strategic priorities and reports on their progress on an annual basis. In addition, the FET Division has also developed a FET Strategic Framework (2015-2020), details of which are presented above (See page 9). Again, the outcomes are reviewed annually, and action plans amended as necessary. All of these reports are published on the website. In addition, the ETB enters into successive 3-Year Strategic Performance Agreements with SOLAS (most recently from 2018-2020). This agreement provides a key link between national strategy and local FET provision. The agreement sets out the ETB's strategic priorities for the three-year period, including provision targets contributing to national targets. These targets include the number of learners on a specific category of programmes, retention, and certification levels. This agreement is reviewed annually with SOLAS.

The FET Division has in place a number of reporting mechanisms as follows:

- Monthly activity report to the Chief Executive.
- Report on key developments in strategic areas to the FET Steering Group.

- PLSS/FARR data reports directly to SOLAS and to management on actual outcomes against planning outcomes targets agreed with SOLAS in the annual plan.
- Report on learning outcomes and QA processes to the Quality Council.
Publication of an annual report by the Board of the ETB which includes a section in respect of FET provision.

Review of quality assurance policy and procedures

Observations

In 2017, the ETB completed an executive self-evaluation as part of the reengagement process with QQI. This process identified key areas for development and improvement. It resulted in the development by the ETB of a three-year strategic continuous improvement plan (CIP) for its QA. The CIP identified 39 individual actions across each of the 11 quality areas listed in the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines. The ETB publishes an annual report on its progress and a revised annual CIP on its website.

The ETB undertakes a number of actions at centre and central level to monitor and review the QA processes for QA planning, monitoring, and reporting of performance of the ETB's FET provision.

Central review

The Quality Council is responsible for the development, oversight, planning, co-ordination, and improvement of quality assurance policies, procedures and processes and is supported by the QASS. The QASS provides a detailed overview report summarising certification and outcomes, including data analysis of grade consistency and centre to centre consistency. In addition, a summary of the feedback on the IV, EA, results approval and appeals reports are provided to the Quality Council for their consideration. The ETB states "that externality is provided through the QQI review of its annual QIP and the SOLAS annual review meeting to discuss progress on implementation of the Strategic Performance Agreement" (SER p103). The Council may make amendments to the priority of the CIPs based on their consideration of the data provided. The minutes of the Quality Council are published on the website.

Centre review

The Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS) holds annual quality improvement planning meetings with FET coordinators on a centre-by-centre basis. The focus is on reviewing the most recent certification period, internal verification and external authentication reports, RAP meeting minutes as

well as appeals examiner feedback. This supports the FET coordinators in planning and putting in place a CIP for the coming year. There is no direct feedback provided on the performance of any individual learning practitioner at this meeting. In addition, the role of the QA officer in working with designated individual centres allows for the development of close working relationships and an insight into the workings of the centre. This is an important strategy for the QASS and seems to be working well.

The outcomes of these reviews are reported to the Quality Council and inform the priorities for the work of the QASS for the following year.

As stated previously, there is a need to strengthen the learner voice in ongoing evaluation of programmes at centre level. In addition, a culture of critical self-reflection should continue to be encouraged among learning practitioners and opportunities created for learning practitioners to be part of the centre's self-evaluation process.

Commendation

The review team commends the development of the annual review of FET centres by the QASS. The CIP for each centre is important and will assist the embedding of quality assurance practices at classroom and centre level.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the ETB further develop and maintain its focus on self-evaluation and on ensuring that it is both valid and reliable.
- The review team recommends that the ETB develop a common self-evaluation framework implementable across all FET centres.

Programme Monitoring & Review

Observations

“All programme development, revisions, reviews and updates are fully governed by ETB QA governance structures.” (SER p106)

Management of the portfolio of the ETB's programmes has been delegated to a sub-committee of the Quality Council. The Programme Governance sub-group has responsibility for the oversight, planning,

coordination, development, and quality of all the programmes and for making recommendations to the Quality Council. The review team noted that LCETB does not have a periodic review schedule for programmes at ETB level to ensure that programmes remain appropriate and are achieving their objective. The current system is one where a FET centre will initiate the process for a programme amendment or a new programme development.

There is now an application procedure for FET centres to apply to use a programme, to amend an existing programme or develop a new programme. The QASS team reviews the applications and manages the proposals based on the scale of the amendment or development required. In many cases the amendments are not substantial and involve correcting an error in the module descriptor, marking sheet, code etc. The module updates are published to coincide with the beginning of the new academic year and detailed in the QA newsletter and made available on the StaffConnect.

Where a decision is made to amend the content of a programme or module, external subject-matter experts are engaged to work with cross-centre communities of practice.

There is no proactive review of programmes in place at present and this is acknowledged in the SER where the ETB states that “there is a need to develop a curriculum review schedule by subject area.” (p.107).

The challenges with the current portfolio of programmes have been described in Section 2 (b). The review team support the ETB in their recognition that they need to develop a curriculum schedule as a matter of priority.

Commendations

- The review team commends the ETB on the establishment of the QASS as the support service driving the development and embedding of the QA policy and procedures and programme management and development.
- The review team commends the ETB on its collaborative approach to the development of new programmes with other ETBs and external stakeholders and recognises that for the ETB to manage the updating of its existing programmes in an efficient and effective manner, continued collaboration with ETBs and external stakeholders will be critical.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that the ETB review its current bank of programmes to ensure that courses offered are relevant to the learning needs and progression ambitions of learners.

Programmes that are outdated should not be offered to learners and should be prioritised for updating.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

Observations

LCETB has a number of relationships with external parties which contribute to the quality of the learner experience of education and training either delivered directly by the ETB or through other organisations on its behalf.

The challenge for the ETB is to ensure that learner experiences are consistent across the programmes provided directly or indirectly by the ETB. As previously discussed, this challenge is complicated by the fact that there are two distinct quality assurance and programme systems operating at community level on behalf of the ETB.

One system of community provision and contracted training provision is operating under the training system using the Transitional Quality Assurance System (TQAS) and delivering legacy FÁS programmes. There are robust planning and monitoring systems in operation for this cohort of providers. Community training centres, specialist training providers and local training initiatives all operate under a grant scheme. Each organisation submits an annual business plan with KPIs. Quarterly performance reports are provided, and a review meeting takes place every six months. Contracted training companies are subject to an Office of Government Procurement (OGP) competition. The main risk here is the possibility that all providers operating under the TQAS are delivering outdated programmes and assessment instruments.

The second system is where community education providers deliver ETB programmes under the FE centre-based policies and procedures. Under the MoU, the seven centres that are members of the Limerick Community Education Network moved from operating under their own QA procedures to working under the QA policy and procedures of the ETB which now employ the learning practitioners. Assessment instruments and marking schemes are developed by the learning practitioners and the IV

is managed at centre level. The EA, Results Approval and Appeals process is managed centrally by the QASS.

While application and financial systems and the QA policy and procedures are quite different, both systems are robust at present. The challenge for the ETB is to begin to integrate the financial management systems and QA governance systems for second providers into one system. The review team noted that second providers felt that the term disadvantaged their learners as if they were not ETB learners even though they are registered as such through the PLSS. The use of the term “secondary provider” should be reconsidered.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that the ETB explore the development of common application and reporting systems for community providers under a common contract or MoU and move away from two separate systems under training and further education (not referring to contracted training providers).

Recommendations on the review of programmes and assessment instruments are relevant to the quality of programmes provided by second providers under the training centres and are made in Section 2b.

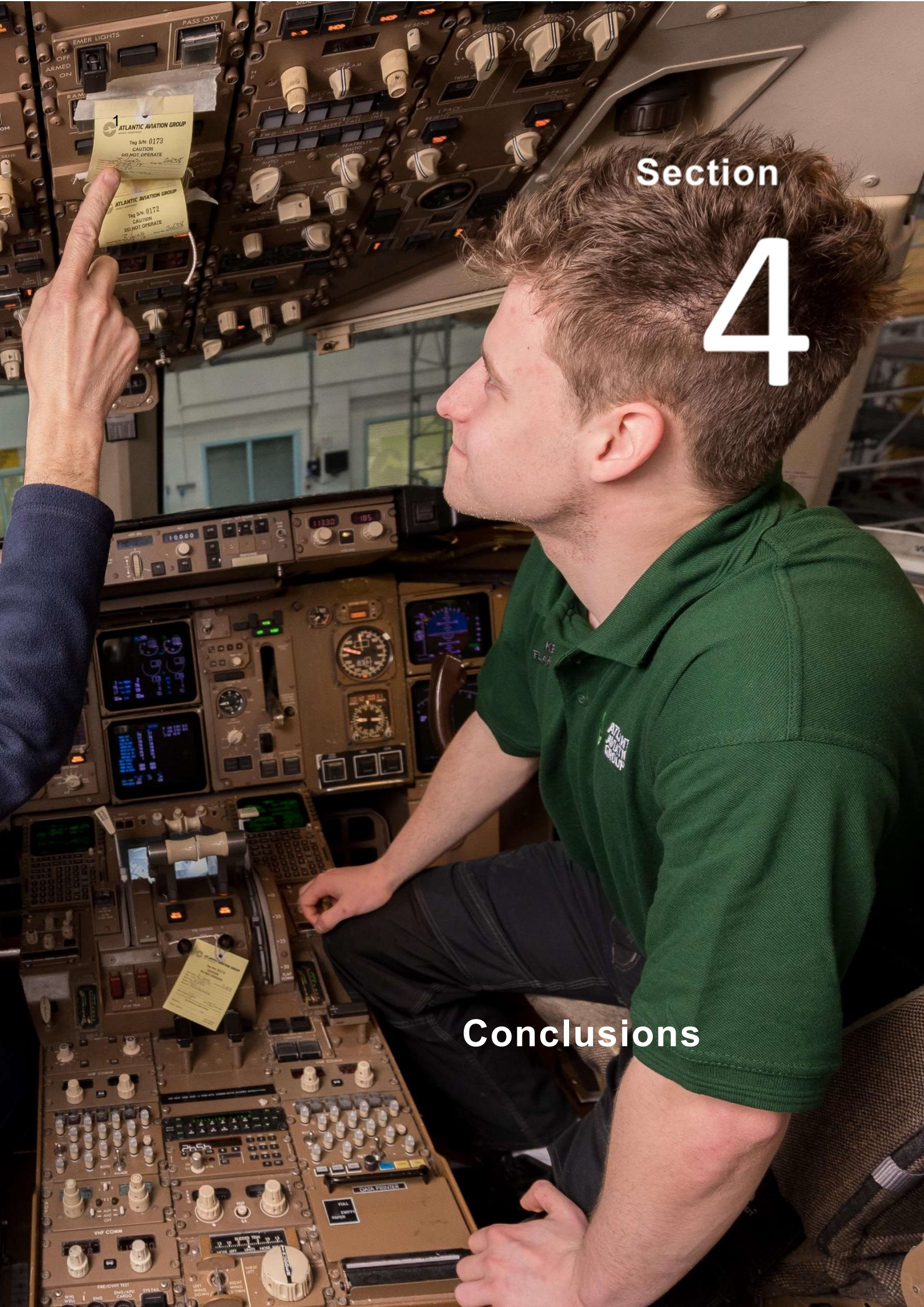
National Hairdressing Apprenticeship programme

There is a separate QA system in place for the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship. The ETB is the co-ordinating provider, and the programme is delivered across the country with all 15 ETBs as collaborating providers. There is in place a national programme board with employer representation.

It was noted by the review team that the governance landscape for QA is becoming more complicated. In the first instance, the ETB is a second provider for SOLAS-managed National Craft Apprenticeship programmes and the programme delivery is governed by the SOLAS QA policy and procedures.

In addition, the ETB is the co-ordinating provider for the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship and manages the QA policies for the delivery of this programme in their own ETB and in the other ETBs. The ETB also operates as a second provider of other new apprenticeship programmes for which other

ETBs are coordinating providers and, as such, their delivery of those programmes is governed by the QA policy and procedures of other coordinating ETBs. Thus, the ETB is operating multiple QA policies and programmes and this complicated process could pose a risk to quality assurance.



Section

4

Conclusions

Section 4: Conclusions

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board has been engaged in a significant transformative process since its inception, managing the merger of three VECs into the ETB in 2013 and the transfer of two training centres from FÁS in 2014. There are many legacy issues arising from the creation of this new organisation. The focus of this review is on the progress of the quality assurance systems. In particular, the organisation has had to address the fact that it has seven sets of QA policies and procedures as well as legacy programmes associated with each of the three VECs and the FÁS training programmes. The stated objective to develop one integrated QA system managing one set of programmes is a long-term one. The review team acknowledges the complexity of this challenge and recognises that this review is spotlighting the progress that has been made towards achieving the objective of one QA system and one portfolio of programmes.

The findings, commendations and recommendations set out below arose from the positive engagement the review team had with the ETB. The recommendations are intended to be constructive and supportive to the ETB, to assist their continuing journey to the enhancement of its learner experiences through the continued development of the quality of its teaching and learning and its quality assurance policies and procedures. The review team described their role to the ETB as “critical friends”, raising a number of areas where there is scope for progress and identifying the most important areas to work on.

Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

Arising from the re-engagement process with QQI in 2017, new governance structures were put in place in 2019. These structures are now well established and seem to be functioning effectively. The terms of reference of the Quality Council describe a delegated authority from the Chief Executive. The Quality Assurance Governance is an executive function the Board vested in the Chief Executive as defined by circular letter 002/2019 Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards. It is the responsibility of the executive to ensure that the QA structures operate within the overall governance structures of the ETB.

In addition, it is clear that the QA governance structures do provide a real opportunity for staff across the FET provision to contribute to the management and development of policy, procedures, and

programmes. This is important in order to foster ownership at centre level of the development and application of QA policies and procedures.

The new governance structures have been in place for less than two years and will need further time to embed. The review team noted that they may need to be refined in the light of future experience. It was also noted that current participants are drawn from staff across the FET Division and – even though the ToRs allow for external participation – no externs have been appointed to the structures. The appointment of external representation should be prioritised in the next phase of development.

It was also noted that the governance landscape for QA is becoming more complicated. In the case of this ETB, it is the coordinating provider for the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship and is also operating as a second provider on other new apprenticeship programmes managed by other ETBs as well as the National Craft Apprenticeships under the QA of SOLAS. Thus, LCETB is currently operating under its own QA infrastructure and delivering programmes for SOLAS and other ETBs under multiple QA policies and procedures. Managing multiple QA policies and procedures poses a risk that must be managed.

The review team commends the ETB for its commitment to quality assurance and the ongoing development of a quality culture across the organisation is evident. At some point in the future the ETB may need to review the structures, and consider simplifying them to make them more coherent.

Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

An important focus for the review team was on learner experience and seeking to determine the consistency of that experience. The commitment to an approach that is “learner-centred, holistic and tailored” (SER p75) to the needs of specific learners was strongly articulated by staff and reflected in the review team’s dialogue with learners. This commitment to learners is enhanced by the decision of the ETB to promote the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across the FET Division. This commitment to UDL is to support the development of innovative teaching methodologies designed to be flexible to meeting the needs of learners. The review team saw examples of this good practice across a variety of programmes. This is a strength of some of the ETB’s provision and is confirmed by reports from external authenticators.

However, there are also challenges facing the ETB.

The first challenge is the difference in approach between the legacy QA systems in further education and training. The ETB acknowledged that there are two legacy assessment systems: locally devised assessments instruments in further education and centrally devised assessment instruments in the training division including with second providers managed by the training division. The ETB indicated that no decision has been made about the future model of assessment instruments in its new integrated QA system.

The review team acknowledges that the decision is a complex one. However, the review team believes that this decision will signpost the direction for the next stages of development of the new integrated QA system and should be made in the near future.

The focus of the QA work to date has been to introduce a number of standard policies and procedures across the ETB's FET provision. The ETB has focused on establishing consistent procedures for internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and Results Approval Panels (RAPs). The ETB maintained IV procedures at centre level and centralised the appointment and work of EAs and the process of the RAPs. The ETB has worked with other ETBs on an initiative supported by ETBI on key policy areas of assessment, resulting in new policies being introduced in 2020 on assessment malpractice, compassionate consideration, reasonable accommodations, appeals, RPL, examinations and secure storage. These are important developments in the journey towards one integrated QA system. The data from these meetings are analysed by the QASS and presented to the Quality Council for review.

A second challenge is the legacy programmes operating across the FET Division. This challenge has two parts. First, the assessment instruments operating under the training section are dated. Second, the content of some of the programmes across the ETB's provision in training and further education is dated and needs to be updated or redeveloped. This is a challenge shared with other ETBs. As discussed earlier, there is limited scope for an ETB to effect improvements to the core curriculum of a CAS national programme. The continued use of dated programmes has an impact on the quality of the learner experience and progression expectations. This feedback was consistent from both staff and external stakeholders.

The development of new programmes is a complex process and resource intensive and can only be addressed efficiently through collaboration with other ETBs. It was reported that ETBs are currently

seeking to develop a framework to support collaborative programme development activity. The ETB has a good history of collaboration at national level with other ETBs on programme and policy development and this is to be commended and encouraged. The review team were presented with two case studies, the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship programme and the Aircraft Painting course. These engagements provided opportunities for capacity building within the ETB but also highlighted the challenges.

Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The ETB has developed a strategic statement (2017-21) which sets out its strategic priorities and reports on their progress on an annual basis. In addition, the FET Division has also developed a FET Strategic Framework (2015-2020), details of which are presented above. Again, the outcomes are reviewed annually, and action plans amended as necessary. All reports are published on the website. In addition, the ETB enters into a 3-year Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS (2018-2020), which provides a key link between national strategy and local FET provision. The agreement sets out the ETB's strategic priorities for the three-year period including provision targets contributing to national targets. These targets include the number of learners on a specific category of programmes, retention, and certification levels. This agreement is reviewed annually with SOLAS.

The ETB has in place a number of reporting mechanisms as follows:

- Monthly activity report to the Chief Executive
- Report on key developments in strategic areas to the FET Steering Group
- PLSS/FARR data reports directly to SOLAS and to management on actual outcomes against planning outcomes targets agreed with SOLAS in the annual plan
- Report on learning outcomes and QA processes to the Quality Council
- Publication of an Annual Report by the Board of the ETB which includes a section on FET provision.

The Quality Assurance Support Service plays a critical role in supporting and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the organisation and in managing the development of quality assurance policies and procedures. The QASS manages the data collection on IV reports, certification and retention, EA reports and data on appeals. This data is analysed on a centre-by-centre basis and the reports are presented to the Quality Council for review.

In addition, the QASS undertakes an annual review with each centre. This review results in a CIP for each centre and the issues raised influence the action plan for the QASS for the following year. While this annual review with individual centres is an important strategy, it was not clear how the centre staff and management engage in the self-evaluation process. It is recommended that the capacity of the centre management and staff to undertake their own self-evaluation processes should be strengthened to enable staff and learners to have input into the end-of-year review. In addition, the review team is of the opinion that data should be more widely captured including data on learning outcomes, retention, certification, progression. This will improve decision-making at centre level.

The active engagement of learners in the formal evaluation processes is limited. While the relationship between learner practitioner and learner is reported as positive by both parties, there are limited opportunities for the collection of learner feedback. The input of learners is, in the main, through an end-of-course evaluation. There is a need for the organisation to establish more formal processes for the ongoing input of learners into course evaluations. ETB needs to create opportunities for the learner voice to impact on their course at centre level, for learner feedback to become part of the centre's review and evaluation, and for the organisation to create structures for significant input by learners at central level. This next phase development is critical to enhancing the learner experience, providing feedback to learning practitioners and developing the evaluation framework of the effectiveness of programmes and centres.

Commendations

1. The review team commends the ETB for the transformation that it has driven in its organisation's structural development and strategic planning, given the complexities involved in the merger of four organisations.
2. The review team commends the commitment of the senior management team to a systematic approach to supporting the quality of learner experience through its administration procedures and the support structures it has put in place.
3. The review team commends the ETB for its commitment to quality assurance as well as the provision of evidence of the ongoing embedding of a quality culture across the organisation.
4. The review team commends the ETB on its collaborative approach to the development of new programmes with other ETBs and external stakeholders and recognises that for the ETB to manage the updating of its existing programmes in an efficient and effective manner, continued collaboration with ETBs and external stakeholders will be critical.

5. The review team commends the ETB on the establishment of the QASS as the support service driving the development and embedding of the QA policy and procedures and programme management and development.
6. The review team commends the ETB on the process of consultation and collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders in the preparation of a comprehensive self-evaluation report. This was a significant achievement, given the impact of, and challenges posed by, the pandemic.
7. The review team commends the ETB on the preparation of a comprehensive and reflective SER document and Provider Profile.
8. The review team commends the ETB for its openness and transparent approach to making information available to the public and to its internal and external stakeholders.
9. The review team commends the ETB staff and management on their commitment to providing a quality learning environment and promoting and supporting a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning.
10. The review team commends the commitment of the ETB's senior management team to the upgrading of the ETB's existing centres, as continuous investment in facilities and resources contributes to the creation of excellent learning environments.
11. The review team commends the ETB's strategy to develop a range of separate support services to support both learners and learning practitioners and on the examples of innovative practices presented to the review team. In particular, the collaboration between the services ensures that there is a coordinated and targeted response to the needs of learners and learning practitioners.
12. The review team commends the ETB on the development of the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship Programme at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications in collaboration with other key stakeholders.
13. The review team commends the ETB's commitment to "contribute to shared curriculum review and development initiatives at national level to ensure that FET provision is relevant, up-to-date and recognised" (SER p55).
14. The review team commends the ETB on the development of exemplars of assessment evidence, briefs and marking schemes.
15. The review team commends the ETB on its centralisation of the recruitment and briefing of EAs to establish consistency in EA reports, and the collection of data from EA reports relevant to the review of the programmes in centres.

16. The review team commends the ETB on the development of the annual review of FET centres by the QASS. The CIP for each centre is important and will assist the embedding of quality assurance practices at classroom and centre level.
17. The review team commends the ETB on the establishment of the Enterprise Engagement Support Service and its work in raising the profile of the ETB by playing a leading role in regional employer networks and in coordinating the ETB's response to employer needs.

Recommendations

1. The review team recommends that the ETB review its current bank of programmes to ensure that courses offered are relevant to the learning needs and progression ambitions of learners. Programmes that are outdated should not be offered to learners and should be prioritised for updating. The review team recommends that the ETB address the legacy dated assessment instruments currently operating under the TQAS.
2. The review team recommends that the further education programmes associated with the three defunct VECs should be streamlined into one set of programmes that can be delivered across the three ETB regions.
3. The review team recommends that the ETB establish clear mechanisms to capture learner feedback in a consistent manner at class level across its FET provision. Learner evaluations should also be included in the centre's self-evaluation process and in evaluation meetings with the QASS.
4. The review team recommends that the ETB reach a decision on the future of the assessment system in the near future, as that decision will inform the strategic direction of the QA policy and procedures in respect of assessment and give direction to the staff development requirements.
5. The review team recommends that the ETB strengthen the role of the EAs in monitoring consistency of assessment and ensure effective and timely feedback to learning practitioners.

Programme Development

6. The review team recommends that the ETB undertake an audit of existing legacy programmes in FET to identify programmes that require updating.

7. The review team recommends that the ETB give consideration to seeking the resources required to speed up the process of reviewing and revising existing programmes and outdated AISs.
8. The review team recommends that more consideration be given when prioritising the development of new programmes like apprenticeships, which, by their nature, are resource intensive while existing outdated programmes continue to be delivered.
9. The review team encourages the ETB to progress or lead in the implementation of their own recommendation for “discussion at national level to streamline validation requirements processes with QQI” (SER p55) and initiate discussions with key stakeholders.

Learner Voice

10. The review team recommends that the ETB explore more structured learner engagement and representation at centre level as this would give more ownership to learners and more responsibility to the ETB to respond to the matters raised.

Self-Evaluation

11. The review team recommends that the ETB further develop and maintain its focus on self-evaluation and on ensuring that it is both valid and reliable.
12. The review team recommends that the ETB develop a common self-evaluation framework implementable across all FET Centres.

Data Management

13. The review team recommends that the ETB seek ways of enhancing their systems of managing learner data.
14. The review team recommends that the ETB work in collaboration with other ETBs and SOLAS on developing new ways of measuring learning outcomes (other than certification) associated with non-certified programmes.
15. The review team recommends that the ETB develop the critical data required to monitor the effectiveness of non-certified programmes. This new data should inform the decision making of the organisation at centre and central level.

Staff Development and Support

16. The ETB recognises that there needs to be a “more cohesive approach to staff induction (including corporate, FET and centre-level processes) should be prioritised.” (SER p50) and the review team supports this recommendation.

17. The review team recommends that the ETB expand its communities of practice for learning practitioners across its FET provision. This will continue to provide opportunities for best practice in teaching and learning to be exchanged among staff teaching similar programmes across different divisions of FET.

18. The review team recommends that the ETB continue to develop case studies setting out exemplars of good practice using existing systems to further disseminate these to learning practitioners across the FET Division.

19. The review team recommends that a formal mentoring scheme be introduced at centre level for new learning practitioners in addition to the induction training provided at centre and central level and that a culture of collaboration among learning practitioners be developed further.

Governance Structures

20. The review team recommends that the ETB act on the terms of reference of the Quality Council which allow for the appointment of external stakeholders or external expertise to the Council.

21. The review team recommends that the ETB ensure that the organisation of the quality assurance work is as simple and efficient as possible, and that key quality criteria and goals are understood and used by all internal and external stakeholders.

22. The review team recommends that the ETB use the models and materials developed in EQAVET as guidance for the development of their QA work, particularly in facilitating the development of a shared understanding of quality and a culture of self-assessment at learning practitioner level and at FET centre level.

KPIs for Strategic Plans

23. The review team recommends that the ETB describe how they will measure their performance, establishing key performance indicators across the departments in achieving their stated strategic objectives.

Progression Pathways

24. The review team recognises that progression pathways are critical to learners' ambitions and recommends that these be further developed. To advance the development of progression pathways to higher education, the review team recommends that the ETB consider appointing a single point of contact for HEIs in relation to collaboration.

Learner Supports

25. The review team recommends that the ETB ensure that the support provided to vulnerable learners by the guidance counsellors continues to be prioritised, given the increasing number of such learners enrolling on its programmes.
26. The review team recommends that the ETB explore the development of an international strategy to expand the opportunities for international/EU projects to develop support staff, managers, learning practitioners and learners.

Second Providers of FET

27. The review team recommends that the ETB examine the possibility of opening a portal to enable all staff of community providers to access policy and procedure documents and templates.
28. The review team recommends that the ETB explore the development of common application and reporting systems for community providers under a common contract or MoU and move away from two separate systems under training and further education (This does not refer to contracted training providers).

Public Information

29. The review team recommends that the ETB continue to be proactive in developing an open and transparent approach to making information available to the public, and to its internal and external stakeholders. It is important that as the use of data to measure the outcomes of its programmes is improved, the ETB publish the outcomes.

Statements on Quality Assurance

A qualitative statement about the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation

In conducting its review, the team read a range of documentation, including the Self-Evaluation Report, the Provider Profile and the supplementary documentation provided by the ETB. The review team accessed the annual reports for 2017-2019, the Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-20 with SOLAS, and the progress reports on the QA Quality Improvement Plan.

The review team met a wide range of staff, learners, members of the management team, collaborative partners, and external stakeholders. Based on the data collected through this process, the review team is satisfied that the ETB is implementing its current quality assurance policies and procedures. Recommendations are made to support the ETB in the enhancement of the implementation of the QA policies and procedures and bring them into line with the QQI Statutory QA Guidelines.

The extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (as listed at 3.4 of the ToR)

Following the extensive process described above, the review team is satisfied that the ETB's Quality Assurance policies and procedures are compliant with QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the Sectoral Specific Guidelines for ETBs. Recommendations are made in this report to support the ETB in the enhancement of its implementation of the QA policies and procedures.

The extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression

The review team met a range of access partners and is confident that the ETB is committed to working with its communities to provide access and progression opportunities, both internally and externally, for its range of learners.

The review team is satisfied that the procedures for access, transfer, and progression in the ETB are in accordance with QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression and recommendations are made in this report to support the further development of ETBs access and progression pathways.

A qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality

The review team found that the ETB quality assurance and enhancement policies and practices advance the organisation's mission and strategic goals. The review team found that governance policy and procedures are in place to support the ETB further develop and embed a systematic approach to quality enhancement throughout the organisation.

A blacksmith with a beard and safety glasses is working in a forge. He is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and brown leather aprons. He is using long-handled tongs to handle glowing metal in a furnace. The background shows a brick wall and a bright fire in the furnace.

Section

5

ETB Review Response

Section 5: ETB Review Response

Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report



Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna
LUIMNIGH & AN CHLÁIR
LIMERICK & CLARE
Education & Training Board

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board

Response to Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance Report

Introduction

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board welcomed the QQI appointed Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance Review in March 2021 to conduct an external review of the effectiveness of the ETB's quality assurance processes in its FET Division, and to provide an external perspective and advice on its enhancement.

Recent years have presented challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, not least the requirement to 'virtually' host the Institutional Review Team visit, the first of its kind for the ETB sector. Despite these challenges, Limerick and Clare ETB would like to commend the professional, positive and constructive engagement between the Review Team and ETB staff, learners and stakeholders.

The Authority values the opportunity afforded by the Quality Assurance Review process to conduct a formal self-evaluation to analyse the implementation and effectiveness of our quality assurance system. An extensive, managed process was carried out, led by a Quality Assurance Review Task Group, and incorporated inputs from learners, staff at all levels of the organisation and external stakeholders. The resultant Self-Evaluation Report outlined how effectively Limerick and Clare ETB assures and enhances the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and service activities to support the achievement of our strategic goals.

Commendations

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board welcomes the Review Team's commendations and recommendations following their week-long visit and 31 meetings with near to 200 staff, learners and stakeholders. In particular, the team recognised core ETB principles, such as learner-centred approach and fostering inclusion; a learning organisation committed to openness and transparency; a focus on quality assurance and a commitment to a collaborative approach to the development of new programmes.

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board Further Education and Training Strategic Framework 2015-2020 defines our core purpose "We provide relevant and innovative Further Education and Training opportunities that address the needs and aspirations of our learners, local communities and employers." It is encouraging that the Review Team commended Limerick and Clare ETB for the many examples of excellent practice to improve the quality of experience of both learners and staff.

Limerick and Clare ETB is very pleased that the centralised supports offered by the Quality Assurance Support Service, the Active Inclusion Support Service, the Enterprise Engagement Support Service, the Technology Enhanced Learning Support Service and the Professional Development Support Service were all recognised and commended throughout the Review Team report. These Support Services provide invaluable frameworks and guidance in their respective areas of responsibility, and in collaboration with our FET Steering Group and Quality Council ensure that the appropriate supports and services for the effective provision of quality assured teaching, learning and assessment are assured.

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board is very much committed to a culture of quality and quality enhancement. The establishment of the Quality Assurance Support Service as the support service driving the development and embedding of the QA policy and procedures and programme management and development is clear evidence of organisational commitment to quality, a development recognised and strongly commended by the external panel.

Recommendations

The Review Team has provided a number of recommendations and, over the coming months, Limerick and Clare ETB's quality assurance governance mechanisms will review each of the recommendations in detail and develop an implementation plan closely aligned with the new ETB's Strategic Statement, 2021-2024.

In particular, Limerick and Clare ETB welcomes the recommendations in the areas of curriculum development and review, which have been consistently prioritised by the FET Division through annual Quality Improvement Plans. Limerick and Clare ETB recognises the critical nature of this area for continued development and will continue to collaborate with other ETBs and relevant agencies in relation to curriculum development, review and validation. We also note the Review Team's recommendations in relation to learner engagement, representation, feedback and evaluation. Indeed, the ETB's commitment to enhancing the Learner Voice is clear. Recent appointments of several staff relating to these key areas will enhance the ETB's capability to improve its processes around learner feedback, curriculum development, instructional design for blended and online delivery and professional development.

Conclusion

Limerick and Clare ETB greatly values the opportunity afforded by the inaugural review process to engage in productive and motivating internal conversations with staff, learners and partners. This self-evaluation process has led to the identification of key recommendations, on which the Review Team further expanded, providing valuable insight and advice going forward. These recommendations will feed into the planning process for a new FET Strategic Framework, 2021-2024.

We would like to sincerely thank the Review Team for their expertise and constructive engagement, and most importantly thank all FET staff, learners, partners and external stakeholders for their genuine commitment, in difficult times, to reflect and help us enhance the effectiveness of our QA processes.



Mr. George O'Callaghan
Chief Executive



Mr. Paul Patton
Director of Further Education and Training



Appendices

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education & Training Boards

1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 QQI established Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in April 2016, and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in May 2017¹. These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

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

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

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

¹ Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (QQI, 2019)

quality assurance procedures) and to section 34 of the 2012 Act (the external review by QQI of a provider’s quality assurance procedures).

1.5 An external review of quality assurance has not been previously undertaken for the ETBs, neither through QQI nor former legacy awarding body processes. QQI is cognisant of the ETBs’ current organisational context in which the establishment of comprehensive and integrated quality assurance systems is an ongoing process. A primary function of the reviews will thus be to inform the future development of quality assurance and enhancement activities within the organisations. Following the completion of the sixteen review reports, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying systemic observations and findings.

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

2 Purposes

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

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through
1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews. • Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases of the review. • Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them. • Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures. • Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB.
2. To provide feedback to ETBs about organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e. how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance. • Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level. • Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards. • Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.
3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent. • Publication of clear timescales and terms of reference for review.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating, as part of the review, ETB reporting on quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible. • Publication of the individual ETB reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences. • Publication of sectoral findings and observations.
4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings. • The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning.
5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB. • Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence. • Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context. • Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation
6. To provide an opportunity for ETBs to articulate their stage of development, mission and objectives and demonstrate the quality assurance of their provision, both individually and as a sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of self-evaluation reports, conducted with input from ETB learners and wider stakeholder groups. • Publication of the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences.

3 Objectives and Criteria for Review

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

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality:

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

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

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) The ETB's mission and strategy

- How/do the ETB's quality assurance arrangements contribute to the fulfilment of these?
- Is the learner experience consistent with this mission?

b) Structures and terms of reference for the governance and management of quality assurance

- Are the arrangements sufficiently comprehensive and robust to ensure strong governance and management of operations (e.g. separation of responsibilities, externality, stakeholder input)?
- Is governance visible and transparent?
- Where multi-level arrangements exist (i.e. where responsibilities are invested in centre managers), is there sufficient clarity, co-ordination, corporate oversight of, and accountability for, these arrangements?

c) The documentation of quality assurance policy and procedures

- How effective are the arrangements for the development and approval of policies and procedures?
- Are policies and procedures coherent and comprehensive (do they incorporate all service types and awarding bodies?), robust and fit for purpose?
- Are policies and procedures systematically evaluated?

d) Staff recruitment, management and development

- How does the ETB assure itself as to the competence of its staff?
- How are professional standards maintained and enhanced?
- How are staff informed of developments impacting the organisation and how can they input to decision-making?

e) Programme development, approval and submission for validation

- What arrangements are in place to ensure alignment of programme development activity with strategic goals and regional needs?
- Are the arrangements for the approval and management of programme development robust, objective and transparent?
- What arrangements are in place to facilitate and oversee a comprehensive programme development process in advance of submission for validation (e.g. the conduct of research, inclusion of external expertise, writing learning outcomes, curricula etc.)?
- Are there structures in place to support collaborative programme development with other ETBs/providers?

f) Access, transfer and progression

- How does the ETB quality assure access, transfer and progression systematically across all programmes and services?
- Are there flexible learning pathways, respecting and attending to the diversity of learners?
- Are admissions, progression and recognition policies and processes clear and transparent for learners and implemented on a consistent basis?

g) Integrity and approval of learner results, including the operation and outcome of internal verification and external authentication processes

- What governance and oversight processes are in place to ensure the integrity of learner assessment and results?
- How does the ETB ensure that these arrangements provide for consistent decision-making and standards across services and centres?

h) Information and data management;

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that data are reliable and secure?
- How are data utilised as part of the quality assurance system?
- What arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records (including, where relevant, the sharing of learner data with other providers on national apprenticeships)?
- How is compliance with data legislation ensured?

i) Public information and communications;

- Is information on the quality assurance system, procedures and activities publicly available and regularly updated?

Indicative Matters to be Explored

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that published information in relation to all provision (including by centres) is clear, accurate, up to date and easily accessible?

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) The learning environment

- How/is the quality of the learning experience monitored?
- How/are modes of delivery and pedagogical methods evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?
- How is the quality of the learning experience of learners on work placements ensured?
- Is there evidence of enhancement in teaching and learning?

b) Assessment of learners

- How is the integrity, consistency and security of assessment instruments, methodologies, procedures and records ensured – including in respect of recognition of prior learning?
- How is the standard of assessment of learners on work placements ensured – particularly where these are undertaken by non-ETB staff?
- Do learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and are they given feedback on assessment?

c) Supports for learners

- How are support services planned and monitored to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?
- How does the ETB ensure consistency in the availability of appropriate supports to learners across different settings/regions?
- Are learners aware of the existence of supports?

Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Evaluate the arrangements for the monitoring, review and evaluation of, and reporting on, the ETB's education, training and related services (including through third-party arrangements) and the quality assurance system and procedures underpinning them. It will also reflect on how these processes are

utilised to complete the quality cycle through the identification and promotion of effective practice and by addressing areas for improvement. This will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) Self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including programme and quality review)

- What are the processes for quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting?
- Are the processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including the self-evaluation report undertaken for the inaugural review) comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based?
- Is there evidence of strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of internal quality assurance reviews and monitoring (e.g. review reports, external authenticator reports, learner feedback reports etc.)?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?

b) Programme monitoring and review

- How are programme delivery and outcomes monitored across multiple centres (including collection of feedback from learners/stakeholders)?
- Are mechanisms for periodic review of programmes comprehensive, inclusive and robust?
- Is there evidence that the outcome of programme monitoring and review informs programme modification and enhancement?
- Are the outputs of programme monitoring and review considered on a strategic basis by the ETB's governance bodies to inform decision-making?

c) Oversight, monitoring and review of relationships with external/third parties (in particular, with contracted training providers, community training providers, and other collaborative provision).

- How does the ETB ensure the suitability of the external parties with which it engages?
- Is the nature of the arrangements with each external party published?
- Is the effectiveness of these arrangements monitored and reviewed through ETB governance?
- Does the ETB assess its impact within the region and local communities?

3.2 In respect of each dimension, the review will:

- i. evaluate the effectiveness of ETB's quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of further education, training, and related services; and
- ii. identify perceived gaps in the internal quality assurance mechanisms and the appropriateness, sufficiency, prioritisation and timeliness of planned measures to address them in the context of the ETB's current stage of development; and

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

3.3 Following consideration of the matters above, the review will:

- Provide a qualitative statement about the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation;
- Provide a statement about the extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (as listed at 3.4), to include an explicit qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;²
- Provide a qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality; and
- Identify effective practice and recommendations for further improvement.

3.4 The implementation and effectiveness of QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines will be considered in the context of the following criteria:

- The ETB's mission and objectives for quality assurance;
- QQI's Sector-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards
- QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes;
- QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning;
- QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;
- QQI's Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training; and
- Relevant European guidelines and practice on quality and quality assurance

4 The Review Team

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

4.2 QQI will identify an appropriate team of reviewers for each review who are independent of the ETB with the appropriate skills and experience required to perform their tasks. This will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, teaching

² <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows³:

Chairperson

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

- Leading the conduct of the review and ensuring that proceedings remain focused.
- Coordinating the work of reviewers.
- Fostering open and respectful exchanges of opinion and ensuring that the views of all participants are valued and considered.
- Facilitating the emergence of evidence-based team decisions (ideally based on consensus).
- Contributing to, and overseeing the production of, the review report within the timeline agreed with QQI, approving amendments or convening additional meetings if required.

Co-ordinating Reviewer

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

- Acting as the liaison between the review team and QQI; and, during the main review visit, between the review team and the ETB review co-ordinator.
- Maintaining records of discussions during the planning and main review visits.
- Co-ordinating the drafting of the review report in consultation with the team members and under the direction of the chairperson within the timeline agreed with QQI.

All Review Team Members

4.5 The role of all review team members includes:

- Preparing for the review by reading and critically evaluating all written material;
- Investigating and testing claims made in the self-evaluation report and other ETB documents during the main review visit by speaking to a range of staff, learners and stakeholders.
- Contributing to the production of the review report, ensuring that their particular perspective and voice (i.e. learner, industry, stakeholder, international etc.) forms an integral part of the review.

³ Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.

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

5 The Review Process and Timeline

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

Step	Action	Timeframe
Preparation	Preparation of a provider profile by each ETB (e.g. outlining mission; strategic objectives; local context; data on staff profiles; recent developments; key challenges).	6-9 months before first main review visit
	Provision of ETB data by SOLAS (e.g. data on learner profiles; local context; strategic direction).	
	Establishment of review teams and identification of ETBs for review by each review team, selected in accordance with the ETB provider profiles and data and in consultation with ETBs on potential conflicts of interest.	
Self-Evaluation Report (SER)	Preparation and publication by ETBs of individual, inclusive, whole-of-organisation self-evaluations of how effectively they assure the quality of teaching, learning and service activities.	11 weeks before main review visit
Desk Review	Desk review of the self-evaluation reports by the review teams.	Before initial meeting
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training, briefing from SOLAS, discussion of preliminary impressions and identification of any additional documentation required.	5 weeks after submission of self-evaluation report 6 weeks before main review visit
Planning Visit	A visit to the ETB by the chair and co-ordinating reviewer of the review team to receive information about the self-evaluation process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss any additional information requests.	5 weeks after SER 6 weeks before main review visit
Main Review Visit	A visit to the ETB by the review team to receive and consider evidence from ETB staff, learners and stakeholders in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference.	11 weeks following receipt of self-evaluation report
Individual ETB Reports	Preparation of draft ETB review report by review team.	6-8 weeks after main review visit

Step	Action	Timeframe
	Draft report sent to ETB by QQI for a check of factual accuracy.	1 week following receipt by QQI
	ETB responds with any factual accuracy corrections	1 week following receipt
	Final report sent to ETB.	1 week following receipt of any factual accuracy corrections
	Response to review submitted by ETB.	2 weeks after receipt of final report
Outcomes	QQI considers findings of individual ETB review reports and organisational responses through governance processes.	Next available meeting of QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee
	ETB review reports are published with organisational response.	
Follow-Up	Preparation of an action plan by ETB.	1 month after QQI decision
	QQI seeks feedback from ETB on experience of review.	6 weeks after decision
	One-year follow-up report by ETB to QQI. This (and any subsequent follow-up) may be integrated into annual reports to QQI.	1 year after main review visit
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through annual reporting and dialogue processes.	Continuous

Appendix B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Date: Monday 22nd March 2021				
Theme: Governance & Management/ Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review (Day 1)				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator/Director of FET			Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
10.00-10.45	1. ETB Chief Executive & 6 Representatives from FET Steering Group	George O'Callaghan	Chief Executive, LCETB	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
		Paul Patton	Director of FET	
		Alan Hogan	FET Manager, Innovation, Development & Quality	
		Triona Lynch	FET Manager, FET Provision	
		Aobhan Haverty	FET Manager, Active Inclusion, Strategy & Policy	
		Eimear Brophy	FET Manager, Work-Based Learning	
10.45-11am	2. Presentation of StaffConnect	Alan Hogan	FET Manager, Innovation, Development & Quality	
11:00-11.30am	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.30 - 11.45	Review Team Break			
11.45-12.30	3. Self-Evaluation QA Review Task Group (8 Representatives)	Brendan Ryan	FET Learning Technology Development Officer	Discussion of the development of the self-evaluation report
		Emma Maher	Guidance Counsellor	
		Maud Baritaud	LCETB Review Coordinator	
		Maire Kerrane	FET Coordinator, VESD	
		Lorraine O'Leary	FET Coordinator, Youthreach	
		Martin Cournane	Assistant Manager, FET Youth & Community Training Services	

		Patrick Hogan	Communications and External Relations Specialist	
12.30-1pm	Panel Review Team Meeting			
1pm- 2pm	Review Team Lunch/Break			
2pm-2.45pm	4. Parallel sessions with learners, including learners (max 3 groups)			Discussion of learner experience
	Parallel session 1 (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learners)	Pam Noonan	Core Skills Learner Limerick City	
		Geraldine Bowes	Core Skills Learner Limerick City	
		Elaine Neville	Community Education Shannon Campus	
		Amber Milford	Youthreach MidClare	
		David Harte	L2 Horticulture/L3 Digital Media, Kilrush	Doesn't want camera on
		Angela O'Flynn	Community Education, Limerick City	
	Parallel session 2 (L4-5-6 learners)	Daniel Real	LCFE PLC Learner Software Development Course	
		Keith Conway	VESD Learner (Legal Practices and Procedures) has completed Information and Admin, Retail skills, Reception Skills and Communications	
		Rachel Flanagan	Nursing Studies, PLC Croom Campus	
		Carol McCarthy	Skills to Compete Business Administration (VTOS Shanagolden))	
		Carol Lillis	Youthreach MidCalre (Level 4)	
2.45-3pm	Review Team Break			

3pm-3.45pm	Parallel session 3 (Apprentices & other WB learners)			
		Colin Walsh	Apprentice Astech	
		Alan Walsh	Apprentice Shannon	
		Linda Keane	Aircraft apprentice, Shannon	
		Michael Reeb	Aircraft apprentice, Shannon	
		Mark James Dowling	Apprenticeship, Shannon	
	Parallel session 4 (Past Graduates in HE or employment)	Liam Doherty	HETC - currently employed at the Inn at Dromoland and he completed a one year Supervisory Management course Level 6. 2018 / 19	
		Niamh O'Connor	Nursing Studies in 2020 with us has progressed to a nursing degree programme at UL.	
		William Hanley	Past apprentice, Permanent Defence Forces	
		Konrad Krygier	Past VTOS learner +LIT now Software Engineer	
		Molly Reddington	Past LCFE - now QASS Admin	
		Lorraine Diggins	Past BTEI L5 ECCE - now in MIC, completed work placement on LCETB childcare course	
3.45-4.15pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
4.15pm-4.30pm	Review Team Break			
4.30-5.15pm	5. Parallel sessions with LEARNING PRACTITIONERS (max 3 groups)			
	Parallel session 1 (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learning practitioners)	Tracey Conroy	Core Skills, Limerick City	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Kerry O Sullivan	Core Skills ESOL, Clonroad	
		Pauline.O Mahoney	Core Skills, ICT/Comms/Literacy, Kilrush	

		Michelle Bradley	Community Education Tutor, painting, wellbeing, drawing	
		Pol O Flathartha	Community Education, Irish and Legal rights	
		Laura O'Sullivan	Level 1-3 West Limerick Abbeyfeale/NCW	
		Anita O'Shea	Youthreach Mid Clare	
	Parallel session 2 (L4- 5-6 Learning Practitioners)	Sean Carmody	PLC LCFE / QA Officer	
		Margaret Griffen	VESD Limerick City, Level 5 & 6	
		Bernie O'Riordan	Level 4-6 West Limerick Abbeyfeale/NCW	
		Claire O'Shea	PLC Teacher, FET Croom Campus	
		Joanna O'Connor	Bookkeeping/Payroll/Business Administration/Work Experience (VTOS Shanagolden)	
		Catriona Ryan	Youthreach Mid Clare	
	Parallel session 3 (Apprenticeship & other WBL instructors)	Brian O'flaherty	Shannon Campus	
		Jamie O'Sullivan	Shannon Campus	
		Cioran Hickey	Instructor (Aircraft)	
		Kieran Shaughnessy	HETC Instructor	
		Andrew McNamara	Raheen Campus	
	Paul O Flynn	Raheen Campus		
5.15pm-5.45pm	Panel Review Team Meeting			

Date: Tuesday 23rd March 2021				
Theme: Governance & Management/ Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review (Day 2)				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00- 09.30	ETB Review Coordinator			Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator

9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
10.00-10.45	6. Learner representatives	Liam Shortall	Learners representing LCETB at National Learner Forum, QQI Level 5 Business & admin	Discussion of mechanisms for learner voice
		Noel Hanrahan	Learners representing LCETB at National Learner Forum, QQI Level 5 Social Studies	
		Molly Cantwell	Former LCFE President of Students Union, now in UL	
		Eimear Ryan	LCFE - President of Students Union	
		Ann Nicholas	Past LCETB Board member, level 5 Care of the Older person	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break			
11.30-12.15PM	7. Parallel sessions with FET Coordinators			
	Parallel Session 1 - FET Coordinators Unaccredited/level 1-3 provision	1. Sean O'Carroll	FET Coordinator Part-time provision, Co.Limerick	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		2. Declan Farmer	FET Coordinator Youthreach, Kilrush	
		3. Mary Flannery	FET Coordinator Community Education, limerick City	
		4. Breda O'Driscoll	FET Coordinator Community Education, Co.Clare	
		5. Geraldine O'Reilly	FET Adult Literacy Organiser, Limerick City	
		6. Margot Walsh	FET Coordinator Core Skills, Co.Clare	
	Parallel Session 2 - FET Coordinators Level 4-6 provision (including training provision)	1. James Maher	FET Manager, Raheen Campus	
		2. Bernadette Enright	FET Manager, Hospitality Education and Training Campus	
		3. Cliona O'Kelly	Deputy Director, LCFE	
		4. Mike Ryan	FET Coordinator VESD, Co.Clare	

		5. Leesha Foley	FET Coordinator VTOS, Co.Limerick	
		6. Liam Keane	Youthreach, Co.Clare	
		7. Marie O'Callaghan	PLC Programme Coordinator, Ennis College of FET	
12:15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
12.45pm-1.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break			
1.45-2.30pm	8. Second Providers (6 Representatives of Training Contractors, LTIs, CTCs,	Val Real	Rehab, National Learning Network, Specialist Training Provider	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		Edel McDonough	Clare Youth Services CTC	
		Trevor Lovell	LTI /FAI Development Programme	
		Toni Knowles	Clare Youth Services QQI Coordinator	
		Geraldine Keating	Impact Training, Infection prevention	
		Margaret Murphy	National Learning Network	
2:30-3pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
3:00-3.15pm	Review Team Break			
3.15pm-4pm	9. Parallel sessions with external stakeholders (max 3 groups)			
	Parallel session 1 (Collaborating Providers)	Bernadette Corridan	<i>Kerry ETB, Commis chef Apprenticeship</i>	Local Economic and community plans - collaboration with ETB on regional and local area planning + collaboration with other ETBs to implement national FET strategies
		Dorin Graham	<i>CLDC</i>	
		Dympna McCarron	<i>Cavan/monaghan ETB, OEM Apprenticeship</i>	
		Martina Needham	<i>Adult Education Officer, Donegal ETB/ RPL</i>	
		Bernie Haugh	Chief Officer, Clare County Council.	
		Seamus O'Connor	Chief Officer, Limerick City and County Council	
	Parallel session 2 (Higher Education)	Geraldine Brosnan	Mary Immaculate College (Student Engagement, TEAP project)	

		Rhona McCormack	University of Limerick (Mature Student Office)	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs, including consideration of ATP
		Michael Kenny	Maynooth University, Lecturer Adult and Community Education	
		Deirdre Goggin	Cork Institute of Technology , RPL	
		Treasa Campbell	Certificate of General Learning and Personal Development (MIC)	
	Parallel session 3 (Community Providers & Groups, including representatives of Cooperation Hours)	Catherine Aylmer	Limerick City Community Education Network	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups
		Michelle Nollan	Community Development Worker Clare Local Development Company	
		Helen Fitzgerald	Paul Partnership, Social Programmes Coordinator	
		Carrie O'Donoghue	Ballyhoura Development Company	
		Anita Dooley	Limerick Prison Education Coordinator	
		Elaine Slattery	Ceim ar Cheim Manager (Moyross Probation Project)	
4:00-4.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
4:30-4.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break			
4.45-5.30pm	10. Professional and Administration Services (finance, HR and Facilities/IT)	Jean Gauton	Head of Finance - LCETB	Discussion of the relationship between the ETB's quality assurance system and its professional functions
		Breda Flynn	Head of Human Resources - LCETB	
		Shelagh Graham	Director of OSD	
		Denis O'Brien	Head of ICT and Corporate Affairs - LCETB	
		Eamon Murphy	Head of Capital Procurement - LCETB	
5.30pm-6pm	Private Review Team Meeting			

Date: Wednesday 24th March 2021				
Theme: Programme Development, Monitoring & Review				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator			Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
10:00-10.45	11. Quality Assurance Support Service Team	Alan Hogan	FET Manager, Innovation, Development & Quality	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality
		Maire Lynch	Quality Assurance Support Officer	
		Hanora Lyons	Quality Assurance Support Officer	
		Patsy Hogan	Quality Assurance Support Officer	
		Victoria Hook	Quality Assurance Support Officer	
		Bernie Kelleher	Quality Assurance Administration Support	
10.45-11.15am	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break			
11.30-12.15	12. Learning Practitioners (cross-section of services and programmes)	Suzanne Kiely	National Hairdressing Apprenticeship	Discussion of staff involvement in programme development & review
		Marie O'Callaghan	PLC Programme Coordinator, Ennis College of FET	
		Eileen Norris	Core Skills, Prog Level 1-2 programme	
		John MulQueen	IAC Spray Painting course, Shannon Campus	
		Hanora Lyons	Online IPC module, QASS	
		Shane Cullinane	Call centre operations project, VTOS Assistant Coordinator	
		Rio McGonigle	Croom College of FET, Equine Croom College of FET - L5 & L6 Horsemanship and L6 Equine Breeding courses	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting			

12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break			
1.45-2.45	13. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives	Joe Leddin	Coordinator, Mid-West Regional Skills Forum	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		John Davenport	Johnson & Johnson/ Limerick for Engineering	
		Kathy Halpin	Wyeth Nutrition, HR Business Partner with responsibility for Apprentices	
		David Ward	Lufthansa Technik	
		Avril Glynn	Aughinish alumina	
		John Gleeson	General Manager, Transact Campus Ireland	
		Wayne Lloyd	President of the Hairdressing Council of Ireland	
2.45-3.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
3.15-3.30	Review Team Break			
3.30-4.15	14. ETB Employer Engagement Function	Eimear Brophy	FET Manager, Work-based learning /EESS	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local skills needs and quality assuring provision
		Patricia Haugh	EESS, Skills to Advance	
		Michael O'Donnell	Senior Training Advisor, Raheen Campus	
		Marie O'Callaghan	PLC Programme Coordinator, Ennis College of FET	
		Kevin Bartley	Assistant Manager (Apprenticeships), Raheen Campus	
		Bernadette Enright	FET Manager, HETC	
		Karina Ryan	Assistant Manager, Raheen Campus	
4.15-4.45	Private Review Team Meeting			

Date: Friday 26th March 2021	
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Theme: Wrap-up					
Time (GMT)	Group	People	ROLE	Purpose	
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator			Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator	
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting				
10-10.45am	20. Parallel sessions on T&L Supports				
	Parallel session 1 - Learner support services staff (e.g. Active Inclusion Support Service, literacy, English language etc.)	Gerry Mitchell	Psychotherapist Youthreach	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement of support services to learners	
		Sinead Wall	Learner Hub Representative		
		Kerry O'Sullivan	ESOL Learning Practitioner		
		Hanora Hartnett	Deputy Principal, LCFE		
		Greg Dillon	Learner Hub Representative		
		Margot Walsh	FET Coordinator, Core Skills, Clonroad Campus		
	Aobhan Haverty	FET Manager, Active Inclusion, Strategy and Policy			
	Parallel session 2 - Staff Development and Supports	Tara Robinson	Professional Development Officer	Discussion on Staff Development approach and staff supports	
		Marie Tuttle	TEL Support Officer		
		Triona Lynch	FET Manager, FET Provision		
		Alan Hogan	FET Manager, Innovation, Development & Quality		
		Josephine Dempsey	Youth Provision Coordinator		
	10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
	11.15-11.30	Review Team Break			
11.30-12.15pm	QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/Director of FET			QQI gathers feedback on the review process	

12.15-12.30pm	Review Team Break			
11.30am	Additional Information	Donncha O'Treseaigh	LCETB Director of Schools	Available for any additional/follow-up meetings with ETB participants as determined by review team. If not required, used by review team to discuss initial findings
	Review Team Lunch/Break			
1:45-3:15	Private Review Team Meeting			Review team discuss initial findings and prepare oral feedback
3.15-3.45	ETB Chief Executive, Steering Group, QA Review Task Group, Group of Learners			Oral feedback on initial review findings
3.45-4.00	Review Team Break			
4.00-5.00	Private Review Team Meeting			Review team discuss report drafting

Glossary of Terms

QQI glossary of terms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition/Explanation
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AONTAS	Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CAO	Central Applications Office
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Core	Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, developed by QQI for use by all Providers
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
Erasmus+	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
Fáilte Ireland	Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority
FET	Further Education and Training
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
Moodle	A free, open-source online learning management system (LMS) that supports learning and training needs
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality Assurance
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS (formerly FÁS)	The National Further Education and Training Authority (responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring FET in Ireland)
SPA	Strategic Performance Agreement (between the ETB & Solas)
TEL	Technology-Enhanced Learning
Youthreach	Service providing early school leavers without and formal qualifications with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience
VECs	Vocational and Education Committees (later became ETBs)

