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Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality Assurance Guidelines

Blended Learning, QA and Academic Management Webinar

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18 September 2020



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Observations on last term

- Overall, the pivot succeeded, but not for everybody
 - The tertiary education system responded
 - Students are an influential group and they support each other
 - Learning outcomes were critical
 - Quality assurance processes supported change management
 - ICT critically important in enabling rapid change
 - Assessment - academic integrity largely maintained
-
- [-The Impact of COVID-19 modifications to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Irish Further Education and Training and Higher Education - A QQI Evaluation \(August 2020\)](#)



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What next for QA?

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Provider Map to Using QQI Statutory QA Guidelines

POLICY

QQI POLICY ON STATUTORY QA GUIDELINES

Published December 2014

1

Policy sets out:

- » QQI design and development of QA guidelines
- » International influences
- » Scope of QA guidelines



CORE

CORE STATUTORY QA GUIDELINES

2

All providers must ensure that their QA procedures are informed by the Core Statutory QA Guidelines.

The Core QA Guidelines are:

- » Fundamental, common requirements
- » Applicable to ALL providers
- » Informed by European Standards and Guidelines



MODULES

SECTOR SPECIFIC STATUTORY QA GUIDELINES

TOPIC SPECIFIC STATUTORY QA GUIDELINES

3

Providers should have regard to the Sector Specific Statutory QA Guidelines as appropriate.

The Sector Specific Statutory QA Guidelines are:

- » More detailed or specific guidelines to some providers
- » Regulatory guidelines for particular categories of provider

Providers should have regard to the Topic Specific Statutory QA Guidelines as appropriate.

The Topic Specific Statutory QA Guidelines are:

- » Additional guidelines on specific areas beyond the core
- » May or may not apply to individual providers



QQI INITIATIVES ~ ENHANCEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Events

Activities

Publications



Core Statutory QA Guidelines I

Purpose:

- intended to assist providers in the development of internal QA procedures and systems, which are appropriate to individual provider contexts, and which will promote and support quality in the education and training programmes, research (as appropriate) and related services offered.
- **ALL** providers must have regard to these core statutory QA guidelines when developing their internal quality assurance procedures. A provider's scale and scope of activity will determine the level of complexity of their QA procedures, which should always be fit-for-purpose and context.
- Guidelines **do not prescribe the manner in which providers must implement their QA procedures.**
- ***These guidelines are to be used:***
 - by providers when designing, establishing, evaluating, maintaining, renewing and reviewing their quality assurance policies and procedures.
 - as a basis for the approval by QQI of providers' quality assurance procedures (other than for previously established universities).
- ***These guidelines are not intended:***
 - to prescribe how providers are to carry out their work or run their organisations.
 - as a 'how to' manual for providers on the establishment of QA procedures. Rather, it is up to providers to establish an internal quality system appropriate to their individual context which incorporates both operational procedures and a system of review to monitor the effectiveness of those procedures.



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Core Statutory QA Guidelines II

Audience:

- The core QA guidelines are fundamental, common requirements that are applicable to **all** providers.
- They have been informed by the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework.
- Intended to guide providers through their legal responsibilities for the development of quality assurance procedures for the provision of education and training, research and related areas.



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Principles of Quality Assurance

- Primary responsibility lies with providers.
- QA requires planning, resources and commitment.
- Continuous improvement must be the goal of a quality assurance process.
- Quality systems should enhance transparency.
- Quality systems are context dependent.
- Ownership and understanding of a provider quality system by its management and staff are crucial.



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Internal QA- Role of the Provider

- Quality and its assurance is the primary responsibility of the provider. This includes the legal obligations of providers to develop and implement the policies and procedures necessary to achieve and maintain quality in educational and related services, and agree these with QQI.
- Internal QA refers to the mechanisms and procedures developed and adopted by providers to achieve and maintain a desired level of quality in educational provision, research and related services.

The desired level and complexity will be influenced by the provider's context, including scope and level of provision and overall goals, as well as its external obligations to all stakeholders (e.g. to regulators and to statutory and professional bodies and other national requirements).

- Section 2 of the Core QAGs identifies the areas of a provider's activity to be covered by QA procedures.



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Components of a Provider's Quality Assurance System

- Mission / Strategy.
- Policy statements showing understanding of responsibilities.
- Procedures designed to implement the policies.
- Internal Monitoring System.
- Self-Evaluation System.
- Improvement focus.



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Scope of provision

- NFQ levels and award types, fields of learning, target learners, numbers of learners, location.

Capacity of the provider

- Be an established legal entity, with education and training as a principal function.
- Have sufficient resources as well as corporate, structural and internal quality assurance systems in place to sustainably provide education and training programmes that can be submitted for QQI validation.
- Demonstrate their ability to design, develop, provide and review programmes.



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External QA Oversight – Role of the QA Agency

- QQI's role is in the external QA of providers' QA procedures.
- External QA shares the same broad objectives as provider-owned quality assurance i.e. the maintenance of a desired level of quality in education, training, research and related services. These objectives are achieved by QQI through:
 - Establishing guidelines to inform provider-owned quality assurance;
 - Establishing and implementing policies and procedures for external quality assurance;
 - Promoting and supporting innovation and continuous improvement and enhancement in provider QA methods. Providers sharing effective practice is a main objective to this approach;
 - Collaboration and engagement with, and collecting feedback from, providers on policies and QA guidelines; and
 - Publishing quality review reports, including the outcomes of programme, provider, thematic and whole-of-system reviews and requiring providers to do the same.



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All aboard the online express!

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Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Blended Learning

- Developed by an FET and HE providers as part of an expert group
- approach of good practice principles underlying this document - *The focus throughout the guidelines is on raising awareness of issues that are particularly pertinent to the online and overall blended learning context, rather than other kinds of learning and teaching*
- first draft published in December in 2015, concluded in 2018
- Drafted as “flexible distributed learning”, changed to focus on online in the context of blended learning
- Essentially deals with online provision (assuming some face-to-face)
- blended learning is *“the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences”* as defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004).
- These guidelines are neutral on the technology and face-to-face methodology



“Technology employed to deliver online learning offers some significant advantages for quality assurance and enhancement. The way in which learning resources are used by learners can be more easily monitored and evaluated than is the case in face-to-face contexts.”

Organisational Context

- Strategy and planning for blended learning; Infrastructure and resources ; Published expectations on blended learning; Learners outside Ireland; Collaboration and other partners

Programme Context

- Programme outcomes; Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms; Approval and programme validation processes

Learner Experience

- Context; Support available to learners; Equality of opportunity, self-regulation