

QQI Review Report 2021

Inaugural Review
of Kerry 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 Kerry 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 Kerry Education and Training Board was conducted by a team of 6 reviewers selected by QQI. The review team attended a briefing and training session with QQI on 28 September 2021 and the planning visit to Kerry Education and Training Board took place on 7 October 2021. The main review visit was conducted by the full team between 29 November and 3 December 2021.

Chair: Michael Cross

Michael Cross is a former career civil servant with extensive experience of food and farming policy development at UK Government level; in the same context, Michael is an experienced negotiator in Europe at both EU and Council of Europe levels and at bilateral level with other administrations.

In Scotland, Michael was the lead senior civil servant establishing Scotland's first all-age information, advice and guidance body; policy development and implementation of Scotland's strategy for youth entrepreneurship (Determined to Succeed); and the development and delivery of 'More Choices. More Chances.', Scottish Ministers' strategy for tackling unemployment among 16–24-year-olds. Subsequently, Michael was lead senior civil servant supporting Scottish Ministers in a profound programme of post-16 education reform over 2011 – 2014 (Putting Learners at the Centre), including the regionalisation of Scotland's colleges and the introduction of outcome agreements.

Latterly, Michael was Director at the Scottish Funding Council managing relationships with all of Scotland's colleges and universities, with a particular focus on outcome agreement development, alignment of skills provision with labour market need, and pursuing the First Minister's commitment to improve access to university for those from Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

Currently, Michael is senior policy adviser to the Principal at City of Glasgow College, including supporting drafting of the Cumberland-Little Report on the economic impact of Scotland's colleges.

Coordinating Reviewer: Caitríona Ruane

Caitríona Ruane has over 8 years' experience of working in human rights in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia and as a human rights worker in the North of Ireland. Caitríona was Director/CEO of Féile an Phobail – West Belfast 1996 - 2001.

Caitríona was Minister of Education in the 2007 – 2011 Stormont Executive led by Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley. She led necessary reform of the education system with a strong focus on equality and excellence for all. She introduced a new curriculum, a new school building programme, a literacy and numeracy policy, established a Traveller Educational Taskforce, a review of Irish Medium Education and expansion plan, and a newcomer policy for children with English as an additional language.

She was Deputy Ceann Comhairle of the Assembly in Stormont, Founder and Chair of the Women's Caucus in the Assembly and stepped down after representing the people of South Down for four terms.

Caitríona has worked with the Simon Community in a homeless hostel in a border town for three years, and within Aontas Adult Education Programme.

She teaches conflict resolution and negotiations to undergraduate and master's students in Maynooth University. More recently, she has been working with Mayo North-East Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme supporting charities in very remote areas, including Gaeltacht areas, in their journey to comply with the Charity Regulatory Authority Governance Code.

Caitríona is a mother of two daughters, and Mamó to three gorgeous grandchildren.

Learner Representative: Emer McMullin

Emer McMullin is from Donegal and has been employed in the banking sector for 28 years and has enjoyed many customer-facing roles over this time.

Due to the ever-changing landscape in this sector and the threat of job losses, Emer knew that if she were to seek new employment, she would need further qualifications to help with this, as her qualifications were all banking related. Emer called Donegal ETB who put her in contact with its RPL Co Ordinator and Adult Ed Officer who invested so much time in speaking with her and guiding her as to the next steps in her education progression.

Emer then embarked in the Level 6 Major Award in Administration. This process was perfect for her as it gave her the recognition for all the experience she had built up through her career.

Emer then used her initiative and enticed many of her colleagues to join the RPL process and she loves assisting them in any way she can. Emer hopes to build on this area of coaching/mentoring, and she fully believes the RPL process ignited that passion in her.

Emer is very excited to be given this opportunity to be part of this review and is looking forward to the experience immensely.

Peer Expert: Charlie Gorney

Charlie Gorney's educational journey started out in art and design and then moved into computing and technology, after completing a Master's in Computing and Design with the University of Ulster.

A career in education followed, allowing him to undertake fulfilling roles that have given him many opportunities to work with a diverse range of stakeholders within the Further Education and Training sector.

He is a strong believer in lifelong learning for all and, within his current role as Adult Education Officer in Donegal ETB, he has had opportunity to see the benefits of this inclusive approach first- hand.

In his spare time Charlie plays keyboards in a rock and blues band and loves a good jam!

Peer Expert: Aleksandra Grašič

Aleksandra Grašič is employed at the National Institute for VET in Slovenia as coordinator of national reference point for VET in EQAVET network.

Rooted in psychology, she has been active in the world of education from the beginning of her career. She started as professor of psychology in high school, was manager in a private educational company later on, and has become a senior advisor for VET on a national level in recent years.

She is author of different publications, articles and evaluation reports on self-evaluation, teamwork, leadership, quality assurance and quality development in VET.

Industry Representative: Charlie Boyle

Charlie Boyle is a consultant in the area of customer service, customer experience and sales.

In particular, he has a particular interest in the 'experience economy' and how consumers now seek overall better experiences over price or, indeed, product.

Charlie works mainly in the private sector, partnering with companies across many sectors in supporting their continuous improvement in customer experience and sales, and is involved in the National Apprenticeships in Retail Supervision as well as Sales. He has contributed to several 'future skills required' reports.

Section

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Introduction and Context

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Introduction and Context for the Review

Kerry Education and Training Board (Kerry ETB) was established in July 2013 under the Education and Training Boards Act (2013). It is the main, statutory provider of further education and training services in County Kerry. The 2013 Act sets out the functions of the boards in paragraph 1 (c):

‘to plan, provide, coordinate and review the provision of education and training, including education and training for the purpose of employment, and services ancillary thereto in its functional area in – (i) recognised schools or centres for education maintained by it.’

The same Act provides for ETBs, with the permission of the Minister, to make arrangements for the joint performance of its functions in the functional area.

The board of Kerry ETB comprises 21 members. This includes 12 local authority representatives, 2 staff representatives, 2 parent representatives and 5 representatives with special interest in, or knowledge of, education and training. The board meets around 10 times a year. Collectively, the board is responsible for the strategic direction and management of the organisation and overseeing the work of the executive in its implementation. The board brings an informed, independent judgement on both performance and conformance.

Since its formation in 2013, Kerry ETB has been in the process of amalgamating the legacy quality assurance systems that were in place from the former Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and FÁS training provision that the ETB has replaced. As a statutory requirement during the process of re-engagement with QQI, Kerry ETB published its quality assurance agreements which have in turn been approved by QQI and recognised in a letter published on the Kerry ETB website.

It is evident from the self-evaluation report, and also the review week itself, that the process of quality enhancement has been an evolving one within Kerry ETB. Annual Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs), submitted to QQI and published on the ETB’s website, give indicators and targets in areas of enhancement and continual improvement.

The review team finds Kerry ETB's establishment of quality assurance governance structures, supported by the quality assurance unit in helping to create a centralised, systematic, and provider-led approach to quality assurance across the organisation, is of significant value. These have helped not only in satisfying the QQI Core statutory Guidelines but also the sector-specific guidelines for Education and Training Boards.

The publication of a five-year quality improvement plan has helped to align the quality improvement work undertaken by the ETB with the strategic vision and mission of the ETB itself; and also with the strategic performance agreement Kerry ETB has undertaken with SOLAS. This considered approach to quality assurance and enhancement will be of considerable benefit to Kerry ETB in its journey to enhance ETB's quality assurance system



Geography and Locations

As a statutory agency, Kerry ETB has responsibility for delivering education and training provision throughout County Kerry. Its further education and training (FET) provision focuses on raising the standard of education and to support economic growth, sustainability, and the development of communities. The ETB serves a population of some 150,000 people across a wide and largely rural area, with responsibilities reaching from Tarbert to Lauragh across an area of nearly 5,000 square km. The majority of the population live in rural areas, and connections between these and towns remain challenging for many; for those accessing public services, long commutes are often required. Kerry ETB serves a wide hinterland and often delivers part-time courses in parts of the county at a distance from its main campuses and hubs. This is part of a strategic rural outreach approach to FET delivery which also features Kerry College Hubs located across the ten main towns in Kerry, and additional community education outreach in villages across the county. The ETB's Head Office is in

Tralee. In 2021, the ETB provided full-time and part-time FET courses to nearly 11,000 beneficiaries, with a budget of over €37.7m.

The economy¹

Compared to the national average, Kerry has nearly twice the proportion of residents working in tourism, agriculture, forestry and fishing, and a marginally lower proportion working in manufacturing and industries. The commerce and trade sector accounts for around 20% of workers compared with some 24% nationally. Some 4.5% work in transport and communications, compared with approximately 9% nationally.

Educational attainment in Kerry

Kerry ETB highlights in its Provider Profile (table below), that nearly half of the county's adult population have skills levels ending at upper secondary. Likewise, according to the ETB's Provider Profile (p. 26), Census 2016 identifies a significant difference between education attainment levels in Kerry and those at the national level (see Table 4.2).

In short, Kerry has more people with qualifications at ordinary degree level than the national average; and, conversely, there are more people in Kerry with no formal education or only primary or lower secondary education compared with the national average. In addition, there are pockets of educational disadvantage, especially in the county's small towns and rural areas. Early school leaving, together with a lack of progression opportunities, may exacerbate Kerry's low skills levels. Finally, the majority of learners are unemployed, with secondary education their highest level of education.

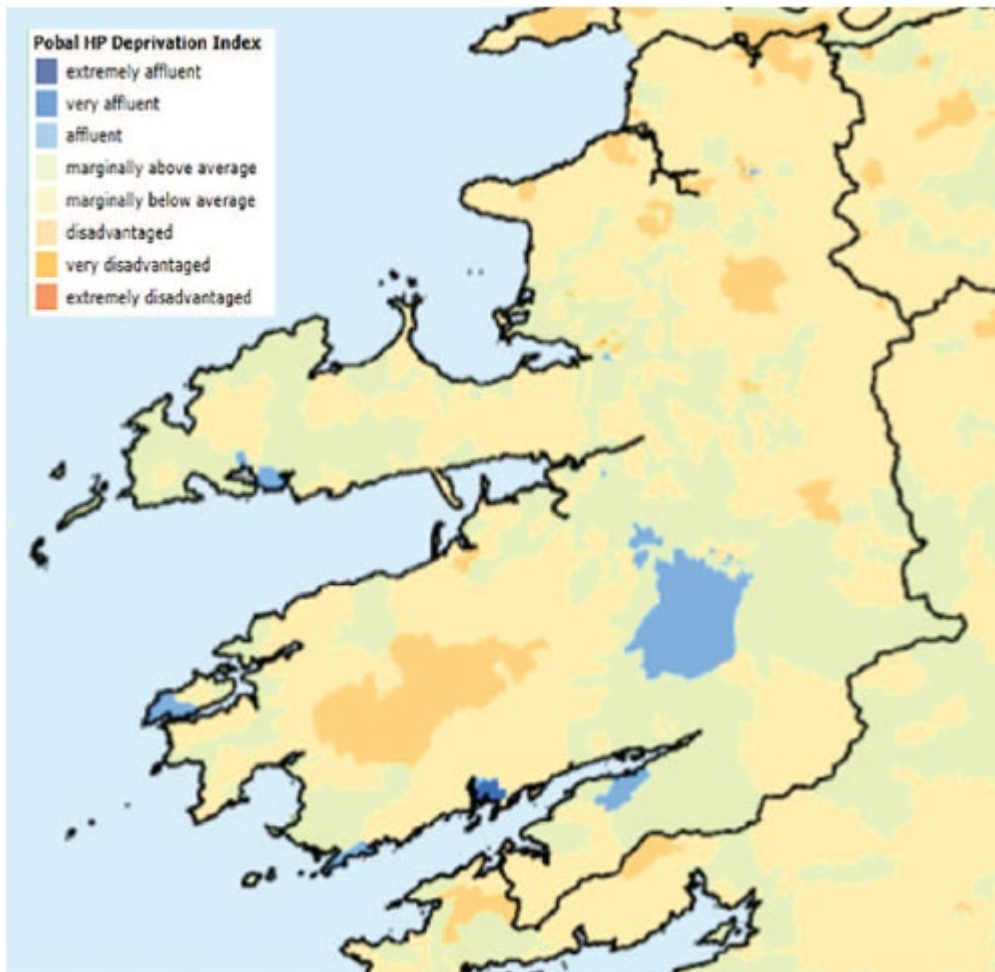
¹ https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/libraryResearch/2020/2020-02-09_kerry-constituency-profile_en.pdf

Table 4.2 | Highest Level of Education Completed in Kerry and Ireland

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED	KERRY #	KERRY %	STATE #	STATE %
No formal education	1786	1.8%	52,214	1.7%
Primary education	11704	11.6%	334,284	10.8%
Lower secondary	15839	15.7%	449,766	14.5%
Upper secondary	18981	18.8%	573,643	18.5%
Technical or vocational qualification	9106	9.0%	271,532	8.8%
Advanced certificate/Completed apprenticeship	6809	6.8%	182,318	5.9%
Higher certificate	5302	5.3%	153,351	5.0%
Ordinary bachelor degree or national diploma	8113	8.0%	237,117	7.7%
Honours bachelor degree, professional qualification or both	8616	8.5%	331,293	10.7%
Postgraduate diploma or degree	6277	6.2%	284,107	9.2%
Doctorate (Ph.D) or higher	535	0.5%	28,759	0.9%
Not stated	7745	7.7%	198,668	6.4%

Unemployment and disadvantage

Kerry scored -1.3 in the Pobal Deprivation Index (2016). 12% of Small Areas were classed as either 'Very Disadvantaged' or 'Disadvantaged', and 28% of the population in those Small Areas under the age of 24. Compared to the national average, there are fewer people at work in Kerry, a higher percentage of retired people, and more people not at work owing to disability. Of those in work, fewer people are in 'Professional Occupations' and more in 'Elementary Occupations' than the State average. Tourism, hospitality, agriculture, forestry and fishing are key economic drivers, employing a high number of people. Manufacturing jobs have steadily decreased since the 1980s, employing just 10% of the workforce in 2016.



Source: Pobal

Figure 4.2 | Pobal Deprivation Index, 2016

Kerry ETB’s mapping of Small Areas of Population (SAP) data to the ten towns in which its core FET infrastructure is located showed significant variation across educational attainment, age dependency, deprivation and unemployment. Maintaining its five rural FET Centres forms a core strategy for Kerry ETB to address the social and economic inequality experienced in communities across the county and is a central tenant of the organisation’s FET capital development work.

Covid-19

The review team recognises the unusual circumstances under which the review of Kerry ETB took place. The planning, preparation and site-visit was undertaken entirely online, with all meetings taking place through Microsoft Teams.

Because of the ongoing public health restrictions, ETB staff had managed online and remote learning for over 18 months. The review team heard during the review visit that this has placed a strain on staff, many of whom would have been managing difficult domestic circumstances. The review team notes that it is to the staff's credit that they continued to maintain a clear focus on the needs of their learners. A number of learners to whom the team spoke made clear how important that continued contact had been for their own learning, and their wider mental health and well-being.

Despite the challenges, during the course of the review visit, the review team held 33 meetings with a range of staff, learners, industry representatives, and other stakeholders. In total, the review team spoke with 158 individuals.

A man with a shaved head, wearing a maroon t-shirt and blue jeans, is sitting in a black office chair in a recording studio. He is wearing large black headphones and looking towards the camera with a slight smile. A professional blue microphone is suspended in front of him on a boom arm. To his left, a golden retriever is sitting on the floor, looking towards the camera. The studio background includes a white desk with a mixing console, a keyboard, and a computer monitor. A rack of audio equipment is visible on a shelf behind the man. The floor is a light-colored carpet.

Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

The Self-Evaluation Process

Kerry ETB provided the review team with a well-produced and comprehensive FET Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Provider Profile. Both documents were provided in advance of the main review visit.

The ETB confirmed that the process and methodology for the self-evaluation were informed by the QQI Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards. Kerry ETB began the process in November 2020, with the establishment of an Inaugural Review Steering Group (IRSG), chaired by the Director of FET, to undertake the self-evaluation exercise that initiates the review process and to plan the active engagement of staff with the review team. This is described in the SER (SER, pp. 21-22) and was confirmed during interviews with the IRSG. The group's Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix 1 of the SER Report (SER pp. 80-81). Its membership was selected to represent a cross-section of staff involved in FET provision, as well as colleagues from supporting departments, as described at interviews with the IRSG. The group includes two directors, four members of the FET management team, three heads of department, three staff members of Kerry College and was supported by members of the Quality Assurance Unit. IRSG members and their affiliations are also stated in Appendix 1 of the SER (SER p. 81)

Phase 1 of the group's work included drafting, reviewing and finalising the self-evaluation report over the period January to July 2021 (SER, Table 1.6, p 21). Phase 2 included planning the review team's visit, liaison, with support from QQI, with the review team's Chair and Coordinating Reviewer, and supporting the main review visit over the week 29 November - 3 December 2021 (SER, Table 1.6 p 21).

Additionally, the IRSG completed both situational analysis and an implementation plan, the latter outlining key objectives, processes, and responsibilities (SER, p. 22). The planned timeframe allowed for data gathering and analysis, review and discussion of drafts, final design, printing and binding. The meeting schedule of the QA Governance Board and the FET Quality Council were also considered to ensure that appropriate time was available for members of the Quality Council to consider and recommend the self-evaluation report to the Chief Executive for final approval in advance of the required submission date. Communications with members of the IRSG to enable both data gathering and drafting were conducted using online meetings and email. In all, eight drafts were prepared (SER, pp. 21-22)

The review team heard that the self-evaluation process was organised so that data-gathering activities and the drafting of the SER could take place simultaneously (SER, p. 23; meeting minutes of interviews with IRSG). The final draft was reviewed by the Governance Board and presented to the FET Quality Council in July 2021. It was subsequently recommended to the CE for approval. The report was submitted to QQI on 23 July 2021 (SER, p. 21).

As outlined in the SER (p. 23) and during the main review visit, data gathering on the themes of teaching, learning and assessment began in January 2021 and continued to May that year. It involved a series of online surveys and focus group discussions with learners and staff. Data gathering on the theme of Governance and Management also started in January and similarly continued through May. It took the form of online surveys with the Programme Governance Board (PGB) and Quality Assurance Governance Board (QAGB). In total there were eleven focus groups: four for Teaching and Learning; two for Learner Supports; and five for Assessment of Learners (SER, pp. 23-24).

The self-evaluation process also draws directly on a number of case studies of various developments undertaken in 2020-21 that were identified by the IRSG as analytical in nature and relevant to the themes selected for the inaugural review (SER p. 24). The review team welcomed this thorough approach adopted by the ETB.

Table 1.9 | Data Gathering Activities

DATA GATHERING ACTIVITIES		Surveying and focus group discussions
STAFF	Theme: The learning environment [QA area/ Teaching, Learning and Assessment]	Teaching and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey • Focus Group 1 • Focus Group 2 • Focus Group 3 • Focus Group 4
	Theme: The learning environment [QA area/ Learner Support]	Supports for Learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Group 5 • Focus Group 6
LEARNERS	Theme: The learning environment [QA area/Teaching, Learning and Assessment]	Assessment of learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey • Focus Group 7 • Focus Group 8 • Focus Group 9 • Focus Group 10 • Focus Group 11

Table 1.10 | Data Gathering Activities - Governance Boards

DATA GATHERING ACTIVITIES Surveying and special session of the PGB and QAGB Jan through to March	
QA Area Governance and Management System	Operations of the PGB and QAGB
	• Online survey
	Contribution of QIP to Kerry ETB Education and Training Strategy 2018-22
	• Focus Group Discussion

Table 1.11 | Case studies and Reports

Themes	QA Area	Case Study
The learning environment	Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Support Provided by the Corporate Capital Technology Department to FET's COVID-19 Response
		Learners' Views about a course module that pivoted to online
		Blended Learning Case Study Software Development Three Blended Learning Case Studies focusing on TEL Tools: TEL for practical subject - Beauty Therapy TEL for practical subject - Culinary Arts TEL for curriculum design
		e-Portfolio Case Study
Supports for learners	Learner support	Open Learning Centre Case Study TEAM Addiction Case Study Learner Support Report
New and existing programmes	Programmes of education and training	Initial Review National Tour Guiding Programme Tracking the views of learners on an online course
Quality assuring assessment	Assessment integrity	Kerry ETB FET Experience of Engaging with Turnitin
Communications	Public information and communications	Admissions Office-Public Information and Marketing

It was evident from the SER (pp. 23-24) that Kerry ETB had identified and combined various methods for self-evaluation, gathering data and feedback from a range of target groups on the same topics; in both its discussion with IRSG members, and through consideration of IRSG meeting minutes, the review team confirmed the ETB's use of surveys, qualitative data, focus groups and case studies

It was reported to the team that taking the time for focus groups allowed participants to talk about their experience, elicit deeper understanding, and become more involved in the process of self-evaluation. This can be helpful in engaging staff and students more deeply in the planning and implementing of quality improvements later in the quality cycle. Using different methods and assessing feedback on the same topic from different target groups by Kerry ETB assured the review team of the methodological competence of quality governance staff at Kerry ETB.

The review team considers that the ETB's approach would likely contribute to objectivity, validity, reliability of data, in addition to participation, involvement, organisational learning, and feelings of ownership and engagement among staff and different stakeholders. The review team noted further examples where several methods were used for self-evaluation of selected topics or quality areas. Again, the review team consider this approach contributes to the objectivity and deeper insight into the learning experience and well-being of the target group in question.

The SER (p. 24 Table 1.10) also provides evidence that governance boards were included in the self-evaluation process using the same feedback methods, online surveys and focus groups discussions, to self-evaluate governance and management systems. These insights were additionally supported through analysis by the Programme Governance Board (PGB) and the QA Governance Board (SER, p. 24 Table 1.10) of the contribution of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to Kerry ETB's Education and Training Strategy 2018-2022. This approach, self-evaluation of governance and management systems, is an advanced one in QA methodology. However, the review team noted that Governance and Management Systems were not among the themes Kerry ETB's quality unit proposed for scrutiny in the inaugural review (SER, Table 1.8); nor did the SER feature a commitment to follow (or not follow) the quality unit proposal, confirmed by IRSG. However, "Self-evaluation of Governance and Management System" was identified in the SER (p. 24, Table 1.10) as an area subject to 'Surveying and special sessions'.

Observations on Self-Evaluation Methodology

The review team notes Kerry ETB's commitment to its inaugural review of quality assurance and acknowledges its thoughtfully designed, systematic approach to the self-evaluation process and development of its Self-Evaluation Report (SER). As noted in Section 2 of the SER, the process began one year before the main review visit, with the establishment of the Inaugural Review Steering Group (IRSG) whose membership included representatives from a cross section of staff from various departments engaged in FET provision, along with those from supporting departments. The process of applying the self-evaluation process to a multi-layered QA governance structure at Kerry ETB was successfully managed by the IRSG and other governance working groups using clear Terms of Reference. Further action in creating the SER was informed by QQI Policy. The self-evaluation timeline was set by QQI and Kerry ETB. The process drew on documentation such as the Kerry ETB Quality Handbook, the existing organisational structure and QA practice, in addition to a situational analysis conducted prior to the initiation of the self-evaluation process. The IRSG prepared and followed an implementation plan, setting out priority areas for self-evaluation and a timeline for actions over November 2020 to June 2021. The SER went through various stages of governance approval before being finalised.

Against that background, the review team considers the Self-Evaluation Report and provider profile to be both well-produced and researched. Both documents provided the review team with useful information and data. The review team noted that it would have been useful had a learner representative been a full member of the IRSG from the start. In particular the review team noted that the membership of the IRSG (SER, Appendix 1, pages 80-81) does not make provision for learner representatives to automatically be full members of the group. While the chair has authority to recommend external members, we consider the omission of learners as 'full' or 'standing' members of the IRSG a missed opportunity. The review team is of the view that active learner participation in all elements of ETB governance mechanisms should be considered.

Commendations

- The review team commends Kerry ETB on the development of well researched and produced, provider profile and self-evaluation report.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB pursue a broader community of interests to ensure the ETB's approach to self-evaluation benefits from a wider range of experience, skills and knowledge and promotes shared ownership of the QA process with all stakeholders.

A photograph of two women in an office environment. The woman on the left is Black, wearing a black lace top and a black headscarf, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The woman on the right is white with blonde hair, wearing a red cardigan over a black top, smiling broadly. She is seated at a desk with her hands on a black keyboard. In the background, other people are partially visible, and there are blue vertical blinds. The text 'Section 3' is overlaid in white on the right side, and 'Quality Assurance & Enhancement' is overlaid in white at the bottom center.

Section

3

**Quality Assurance &
Enhancement**

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

ETB Mission & Strategy

As noted earlier, Kerry ETB's mission is to "create and promote the development of a lifelong learning society in Kerry, so that all who live there have access to the education and training required to fulfil their potential and to meet their personal, social, cultural, economic and civic needs".

The ETB's Self-Evaluation Report supports the evidence the review team heard during its week-long review visit. The review team finds that Kerry ETB aligns quality improvement to its Strategic Vision, Mission and Strategy. In preparing for its inaugural review, and in the publication of its Self-Evaluation Report, the review team is satisfied that significant reflection has been undertaken at senior level within the ETB in determining how quality improvement is mapped to its strategy and mission. In particular, the review team noted the statement on the ETB's SER that "quality improvement planning has assisted Kerry ETB to transition from a re-engagement process with QQI to the current stage, which is characterised by a focus on policy and procedural developments and quality activities in a range of areas." The review team notes, as evidenced in its engagement with the Chief Executive in the first meeting, Kerry ETB's commitment to a learner-centred approach and quality culture in the ETB.

The review team encourages Kerry ETB, consistent with its mission statement, to continue to recognise the social and economic development needs of the entire county and endeavour to develop a consistent learning experience across all FET provision types and services. With the needs of its learners at the core of the ETB's mission, Kerry ETB must maintain a clear focus on a comprehensive and systematic approach to quality assurance in order to support continued delivery of its mission.

The review team is of the view that further work needs to be done to ensure that this vision and associated values are understood and embraced by all Kerry ETB staff and stakeholders. While the review team found the CE and the senior management team (SMT) were consistent in this approach, the review team's engagement throughout the review visit with a wider body of staff and stakeholders, at all levels, suggests improvements can be made to embed, across the entire organisation, the philosophy implied in the ETB's mission, vision and culture.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends the ETB adopts a systematic approach to ensure the current organisational culture is adopted ETB-wide, with practical examples to help define the desired outcomes. To this end, an action plan should be established to communicate and embed the ETB vision and values at all levels.

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

The review team recognises that Kerry ETB has undertaken a significant amount of work to create and implement their quality assurance governance structures and groups, and in establishing the ETB's Quality Council. The review team considers that each group has a clear purpose, as outlined in the relevant Terms of Reference. The team are confident that these structures will continue to evolve. In that context, however, Kerry ETB needs to ensure clear separation between those who produce and develop quality assurance resources and those who approve them. This position is clearly reflected in the published terms of reference of the relevant groups (SER, Appendix 4, pp 86-93).

However, as was acknowledged by the ETB in conversations with learners and also confirmed in the SER, (Section 2.2.1 p. 27), the review team recognises there is a need to secure more diverse membership on, and active participation in, the quality assurance governance groups (QAGBs). In particular, careful consideration should be given to securing meaningful learner and employer representation. The review team considers the appointment of representatives to any governance role should include effective induction in that role, including clarification of purpose and authority. Moreover, sustained support and guidance (for example, formal training, mentoring, buddying) and consideration of remuneration where necessary is essential in allowing learner representatives, in particular, to maximise their contribution. In interviews with learner representatives in governance structures, the review team heard about uncertainty of their role in supporting the ETB's QA agenda. The review team heard that support and clarity around their expected input is necessary to discharge the role effectively. Finally, membership of ETB governance groups should be widely communicated across the ETB to both staff and learners in order for staff and students alike to be aware of who is participating in the ETB's governance arrangements.

In this context, the review team took note of the ETB's assessment in Section 2.2.1 of its SER, in particular that there are gaps in respect of occasional members of the QAGB, specifically two representatives from QA Working Groups and one learner representative. There is a gap in respect of ex-officio members of the Programme Governance Board (PGB), specifically a senior manager, plus

additional gaps in respect of occasional members of this board. These relate to representatives from the QAGB, the National (Apprenticeship) Programme Board, a learner representative, and an industry representative. There are gaps in respect of membership of the National (Apprenticeship) Programme Board for the Commis Chef programme, specifically two employers nominated by the Consortium Steering Group, two mentors nominated by the group of employers and one representative nominated by apprentices.

The review team encourages clear delineation between the approval functions given to Section 44² governance groups (Boards of Management and Committees) and the quality assurance governance groups, in particular the role of the FET Quality Council. As referenced during a number of sessions with learners and external stakeholders during the review-visit, certain key quality policies (for example, the Kerry College admissions policy) did not originate within the quality assurance groups or structures and their approval took place in Section 44 governance groups, rather than the FET Quality Council.

In considering this matter, the review team took note of the “Flow of Reports 2020” table on page 32 of the SER. This made no reference to the planned Admissions Policy for Kerry College. Moreover, when considering paragraph 2.3.1 of the SER (page 33) we read that “the FET Quality Council approved a suite of Assessment Procedures including Recognition of Prior Learning in 2020” and that “the Council approved three policies in 2020:

- a) Programme Approval, Development and Validation Policy
- b) Blended Learning Policy
- c) Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy.”³

Terms of Reference are documented and approved for the FET Quality Council, the Programme Governance Board (PGB), the Quality Assurance Governance Board (QAGB) and the National (Apprenticeship) Programme Boards. As such, the review team are uncertain and confused as to where policies and procedures are being approved.

The review team considers it important that Kerry ETB maintain a clear separation of responsibility between those parts of the system drafting and developing policy and those that approve those policies. In addition, the review team is of the view that the ETB should pay close attention to maintaining

² “Section 44 Committees are i.e. Boards of Management, Governance Boards etc. established in accordance with Section 44 of the ETB Act (2013). These Committees are established to: Perform such one or more of its functions as, in the Board’s opinion, could be better or more conveniently performed by a committee, or Advise the Board in relation to the performance by it of any of its functions”. Kerry ETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER), Footnote 24, p 36

³ Kerry ETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER), p 33

separation between the FET Quality Council and the FET management team and local line management structures.

The review team also noted from the Flow of Reports table that both the Programme Governance Board and the Quality Assurance Governance Board have approved policies and procedures. However, their terms of reference (Appendix 4 of the SER) make clear that both boards have authority only to recommend policies and procedure to the FET Quality Council. The FET Quality Council should itself approve (or otherwise) those policies and procedures.

Finally, we noted from the terms of reference of the FET Quality Council (Appendix 4 of the SER)” that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the ETB has delegated certain governance responsibilities to the FET Quality Council, as detailed below. The FET Quality Council is accountable to the CEO for carrying out its functions, regardless of whether it forms governance sub-groups or working groups to advance these tasks. The FET Quality Council is responsible for the following QA Policies and Procedures:

- Approving the FET quality assurance policies and procedures of the ETB as recommended by the QA Governance Board.

Programme Responsibilities

- Recommending proposals to the CEO, as appropriate, for the development of new programmes that are consistent with the mission and strategy of the ETB, as recommended by the Programme Governance Board;
- Approving programme documentation prior to its submission to the awarding body for validation, as recommended by the Programme Governance Board;
- Making recommendations to the CEO for the establishment of appropriate structures to support new or existing programmes; and
- Making recommendations for staff development where it is necessary or desirable for the improved delivery or development of programmes.”⁴

The review team is of the view that it is essential that the Chief Executive and FET senior managers recognise and give effect to the roles and functions of the governance system. The CE, in particular, having “delegated certain governance responsibilities” (SER p. 27 and Appendix 4, (pp. 86-93) should be mindful that such delegation can risk the integrity of the system that is acting both on his and the ETB’s behalf.

⁴ Kerry ETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER), p 87

Commendation

- The review team commends Kerry ETB for the significant effort it has devoted to creating and implementing QA Governance Structures, Groups and the appointment of an Independent Chair to its Quality Council.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB embeds similar external representation across all of its governance groups including the Programme Governance Board and the Quality Assurance Governance Board, learners, staff, and external stakeholders such as those from industry and local communities including Gaeltacht areas and should be among the stakeholder groups invited to participate.
- The review team recommends that all quality assurance policies and procedures are approved by the FET Quality Council, and that the Programme Governance Board and Quality Assurance Governance Board adhere to their defined role in developing policy and making recommendations, ensuring adherence to appropriate approval functions as outlined in the Terms of Reference.

Documentation of Quality Assurance

The review team heard during the site-visit that quality assurance procedures for Kerry ETB are established across the respective FET provision categories. The review team notes that the ETB has begun formal documentation of its integrated quality assurance policies and procedures into a QA handbook. A draft was made available to the review team during the process of the review. It is the review team's view that this will be a valuable quality assurance resource and having the handbook available to staff and learners will assist a systematic approach to QA implementation.

The review team acknowledges the work undertaken by the QA unit in developing and producing quality resources. These include the roll-out of assessment procedures as evidenced in research reports undertaken as part of the SER. The review team considers it important that these materials are accessible to staff and learners across provision and services. Effective promotion and communication of the handbook will be an important part of the process of creating an integrated QA system.

The review team finds that the use of internal IT systems and portals, such as SharePoint, to publish and publicise quality assurance policies and procedures would benefit from being supplemented by other media. SharePoint can also be utilised to ensure the handbook becomes a live and usable QA manual.

Embedding a Quality Culture

During the main review visit, the review team found evidence that the ETB's organisational culture is changing and evolving in parallel with the self-evaluation process and further development of quality assurance framework of Kerry ETB.

When asked to describe good practice at Kerry ETB, the review team heard encouraging comments from staff, mainly those on the IRSG Group, in the Quality Unit and Quality Council, but also from teachers and trainers, who repeatedly praised the supportive role, arising from Communities of Practice. These positive comments are evidence that the quality values, beliefs and mindset amongst Kerry ETB staff contribute to an evolving quality culture. The review team found significant evidence of a quality culture at Kerry ETB and commend the ETB accordingly.

Among those staff directly involved in the quality process, the review team found a strong awareness of the need to maintain and develop a quality culture in support of long-term development and performance. However, this capacity and understanding was less apparent among other staff from beyond the core quality function. As one staff member told us "what could be improved is maybe down through the organisation there are people who don't understand the process".

There are clear strengths and areas for improvement on which to build: the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the Quality Improvement Plan for October 2017 to December 2022 (Kerry ETB, 2021) and Kerry Education Training Board Education and Training Strategy 2018-2022 provides evidence of, and the positive response to, the self-evaluation findings from 2017. These clearly show that Kerry ETB is focused on a path of continued improvement in relation to its strategic goals, with some already achieved. All this is supplemented by the establishment of their QA governance structure, the experience of this inaugural review, and the review team's analysis of the Kerry ETB's documentation on self-evaluation, monitoring and review which sets out significant steps in developing a quality culture. All this illustrates substantive progress in the developing organisational culture at Kerry ETB in recent years, and the review team commends these efforts.

During review visit sessions, the review team found evidence of quality values, beliefs, and standards. These were reflected in Kerry ETB's language and practice, and captured in quotes from different stakeholders:

- “the focus on learners goes through everything one is doing ...Quality Council”
- “We learned that data is useful to provide a governance and systematic approach” (IRSG)
- “CPD, listening to external stakeholders, support to new staff; we're trying to create a reflective and evaluating culture” (Quality Unit)
- Interviewees also commended the establishment of Communities of Practice - “Communities of practise/working together to support connectivity”.

During interviews with other staff, particularly Heads of FET Support Services, the review team recognised staff with supportive, learner-centred and committed attitudes, both individually, and as a collective. They identified Communities of Practice, where staff exchange, discuss, learn from each other and develop supports for learners together, as valuable groups that supported the process of reflective practice, and maintained the process of continuous learning and improvement. This group of staff also emphasised the importance and value attached to collaborating with external stakeholders. Once again, this view reinforces the review team's view that the ETB can derive great benefit from having knowledge of an external perspective. As one staff member stated, “we are bringing in external experts for additional support to individual learners, when needed, and agreed with the learner, like counselling service from outside, which is very helpful.”

Commendations

- The review team commends the evidence of a continuing and evolving quality culture at the ETB.
- The review team commends the adoption of additional self-evaluation methods, combining surveys and focus groups to strengthen the objectivity and validity of feedback.
- The review team commends the organisation of the self-evaluation process, planned a year ahead, implemented by different groups of the QA governance structure, and monitored by Kerry ETB management and the Quality Council.
- The review team commends the positive and timely response to the self-evaluation findings, addressing the conclusions with relevant measures, and planned in the SER recommendations.
- The review team commends the policy on Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review, laid out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

During the review-visit, it was evident to the review team that staff recruitment, management and development forms an integral element in helping implement the ETB's mission and strategic objectives. A number of interview sessions highlighted Kerry ETB's approach in recruiting staff who displayed the core values, culture and ethos of the ETB. In the opening session, the Chief Executive Officer and his senior management team described a strategic approach when recruiting new staff, predicated on ensuring they would be an appropriate fit within the organisation.

During the review-visit, the review team heard from professional and administrative staff, including the Head of HR, about their approach to recruitment and the process itself. They were clear that recruitment and selection of staff to and within the ETB addressed the relevant requirements of both national and European employment law. During the review week, staff spoke of the range of development initiatives provided to them by Kerry ETB. Professional development in using technology-enhanced learning tools, learner supports, including dyslexia awareness, ESOL, and health and safety awareness during Covid-19 all helped to support staff while benefiting learners throughout 2020 and 2021.

ETB staff spoke of a range of staff development initiatives provided to them by Kerry ETB. The review team recognises that there are opportunities to develop best practice, especially from the teacher induction model provided for ETB schools, and from other areas of the ETB such as the Communities of Practice. This would better enhance the learning and development of all FET staff. Additionally, the review team considers that a more formal and strategic approach to staff development would be of benefit to FET staff so that, alongside their centre or programme induction, they would also enjoy a wider organisational induction.

Kerry ETB's Professional Development Report for 2020, produced for the SER, highlights the need for a more strategic approach, with much of the current Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision (understandably) currently focusing on the need to pivot FET provision to online learning platforms and addressing Health & Safety challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. The review team finds that the establishment of Kerry ETB's Teaching and Learning Working Group, working alongside the QA unit, could lead to a more rounded CPD programme on an annual basis.

In-service CPD events such as consultations and subsequent briefings on implementation of the assessment procedures accounted for the most of Kerry ETB's QA CPD in 2020 and it was evident during the review-visit that this was valuable to staff. This, alongside Technology-Enhanced Learning

(TEL) related CPD, was highlighted as being of benefit and value to staff in their delivery of programmes.

The review team notes that no formal performance management system is in place. Also, there is no system for evaluating the impact of CPD on staff, something which the team feels would be helpful. Additionally, linking FET CPD plans with HR would be of considerable benefit in helping to connect the development of staff within FET to the strategic goals and values of the organisation. This would also help further to assist with staff recruitment, retention, and progression within the organisation by ensuring development activity is closely aligned to the ETB's Mission and Strategy.

Finally, the review team heard from a member of staff, that staff who are not employed on permanent whole-time contracts may be unable to access the ETB's SharePoint, on which substantial CPD resources are available. The review team suggests that the ETB may wish to change this practice to enable some of the development needs and gaps of part-time or temporary staff to be addressed and enhance the quality of their performance.

Commendation

- The review team commends the systematic approach adopted to staff recruitment, management and development and the range of development opportunities the ETB make available to its staff.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB develop and implement a coherent programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff, including hourly paid-staff and those delivering second provider contracted training. Such a programme should have clear links to the organisation's mission and strategy, and feature annual review and evaluation of impact, drawing on the views of participants.
- The review team recommends that the programme of CPD proposed above be further enhanced with a revised policy on staff, recruitment, management and development, aligned with the goals, values, and mission of the ETB. This might include:
 - a formal induction to the organisation, including a briefing on the Kerry ETB Quality Assurance system and any specific QA requirements of the post;
 - processes for staff mentoring

- systematic recording of CPD undertaken by staff aligned to the organisation's goals, values and mission. The current policy should be applied consistently across the ETB by staff.
- The review team recommends staff are engaged in all phases of the QA cycle and have the opportunity to join a Community of Practice to share learning, deepen knowledge and embed improvement.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

The review team heard that Kerry ETB has invested a significant amount of time and staff resourcing in the development of new programmes under the revised validation criteria for FET providers, as issued by QQI in 2018. Alongside this approach, the ETB's FET service has undertaken a significant journey of understanding in preparing, planning and implementing the programmes.

The involvement of employers in the development of both the Commis Chef apprenticeship and Tour Guiding programmes is evidenced in the programme design and was further outlined clearly during the review of the ETB. The review team welcomes this element of stakeholder engagement and finds it will form an important part of the process when the ETB undertakes the validation process with other new programmes in the future. As outlined in the SER, an important part of programme development will be the need to identify skills needs and emerging trends for future employment or progression, allowing for value and currency in the qualifications being offered.

The review team heard from both staff and learners that an area demanding greater attention in programme design will be addressing the input from learners themselves. Meanwhile, in discussions with the ETB's senior team, the review team heard arguments for more rapid approval of new and different courses by the relevant state agencies. This point was rooted in the expectation of a rapidly re-shaping of the economy, with employers – and learners – demanding shorter, more flexible courses and pathways, including the use of micro-credentials, to support a smoother and faster transition from learning to work. One interviewee informed the review team “that the system can be really inflexible regarding starting new programmes. There is lots of potential out there. Should be quicker to change things in curriculum content”. The review team saw merit in this argument but noted the need to retain rigorous standards.

Apprenticeships

The review team found that Kerry ETB has been at the forefront in developing the next generation of occupation-specific apprenticeships, and has achieved significant experience in scoping, developing, validation and delivery through its development of the Commis Chef apprenticeship.

The programme's governance and management structure, a specific requirement of the QQI Topic Specific Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes, performs a key role in the programme monitoring requirements. Reports generated by the National (Commis Chef) Programme Board and the National Examinations Board for the Commis Chef, which are recommended to the Kerry ETB Quality Council, will help inform a robust evidence base when re-validating the programme.

During the review week, collaborative partners, industry stakeholders, and practitioners (all members of the programme board or Consortium Steering Group) spoke of the sound basis for the Commis Chef programme and how this coordinating group will help to monitor and improve the current and future iterations and revisions of the programme.

A key strategic objective for Kerry ETB in their Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS has been to increase apprenticeship numbers. The development of the Wind Turbine Maintenance Apprenticeship, a further national occupational specific apprenticeship programme, is proposed. Currently, there is both national and international demand for the current version of this course, as was outlined to us by staff from the ETB during the review week.

The review team finds that the direct involvement by industry in the Consortium Steering Group which has been formed for this programme is an important governance component and will help inform strategic decision making while also ascertaining the supply and demand needs of industry.

Development of both the Commis Chef and the proposed introduction of the Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician places the ETB in a strong position for the development of future apprenticeship programmes. However, the review team noted from Section 2.2.1 of the SER, (p 27) the absence of apprentice and employer representation in the governance of the Commis Chef programme. Feedback during the review week from past and present apprentices suggests to the review team that their involvement in programme governance, and the first-hand experience that would bring, would improve apprenticeship development within Kerry ETB.

Commendations

- The review team commends Kerry ETB for the development and expansion of the Commis Chef and Wind Turbine apprenticeships and for taking a lead nationally in these programmes.
- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB ensures meaningful apprentice involvement in the governance components of the Apprenticeship Programmes.

Labour market needs

In the course of the review, the review team encountered a number of areas in which stakeholders prompted the consideration of the extent to which the ETB's existing provision is aligned to the likely changes in labour market demand in the decade ahead. Provision planning based on analysis of future skills needs and learner demand should be a key consideration for the ETB in future programme design. The review team are keen record those considerations which have particular resonance in a number of sectors. In addressing these considerations, the ETB will be in a position to review the currency of its offer to learners and employers.

Kerry ETB's Provider Profile identifies agriculture and tourism as sectors among the largest employers in the county. 8% of the population of Kerry is involved in agriculture, forestry and fishing, almost double that of the national average, with a further 10% are involved in accommodation and food service activities, again almost double the national average. Moreover, Ireland's Agri-food sector is an integral part of the economy and society, especially for its rural and coastal communities. County Kerry has strong connections to the sector. In addition, Kerry is a significantly rural county, with 12.5% of Small Areas in Kerry classified as 'very disadvantaged' or 'disadvantaged'; nearly 30% of the population living in these areas are aged under 24 years of age. The review team heard from stakeholders during the review visit that there may be opportunities to explore development and provision of more courses in the Agri sector.

In 2018, 223 learners benefitted from Kerry ETB courses in Agriculture, Horticulture, and Mariculture, rising to 414 in 2019, and falling again to 229 in 2020. The record suggests no learners studied 'Natural Resources' over the period 2018-2020.

The review team met a wide range of people including employers, representatives from the Regional Skills body, and community organisations. During the discussions with the Quality Council, the Dingle Hub/Corca Dhuibhne 2030, a community enterprise initiative, was identified by the Chair of the Quality

Council as an innovator, working closely with MAREI⁵. MAREI is the Science Foundation Ireland's energy, climate and marine research and innovation body. A resulting initiative was a Community Energy Mentor Training Course run by the hub in conjunction with Kerry ETB which concluded in 2020. 120 farmers are linked to the Dingle Hub and Kerry ETB plays an important role in sustaining these links. The courses educated farmers in the concepts of energy sustainability, energy technology assessment, and the promotion of sustainable energy technology at community level. The independent Chair of the Quality Council told the review team that the course was welcomed by both SOLAS and the Department of Energy, Climate and Communications, and is now delivered in at least two other ETBs and has the potential for a national rollout. The review team heard that "these initiatives are influencing national policy, and could not happen without Kerry ETB involvement and, indeed leadership". The need to engage with the farming community, "helping them and rural communities to transition to low carbon and address biodiversity challenges", was identified as a priority to Kerry ETB. Dialogue with staff during the review site visit indicated that Kerry ETB envisages running some of these education and training programmes (through and with Kerry ETB) in 2022, and also addressing aspects of Digitalisation.

Consistent with its engagement with other partners at the Dingle Hub the Review Team reflected on other collaborative opportunities that the ETB might explore, and which might help it build capacity, e.g., given the significant agricultural activity in Kerry the review team took the view that being proactive in building relationships with organisations in the sector might bring partnership opportunities that could enhance and expand the service the ETB offers to its local communities. For example, there may be some value in the ETB considering what further supports it can lend Kerry's agricultural communities in adjusting to the changes in practice implied by the Climate Change Crisis.

Access, Transfer and Progression

The review team finds that an example of Kerry ETB's clear and strategic focus on the learner is the establishment of the Kerry College Campus as a model for an integrated approach to FET delivery and access to FET courses and programmes. The review team heard during numerous sessions during the review week how elements of this model, such as the information made available to prospective learners, having a single point of admissions for courses, and having clear pathways to employment or progression to other tertiary education options, are considered to be exemplary.

⁵ <https://www.marei.ie/>

It was similarly evident to the review team that staff adopted a learner-centred approach in other parts of the ETB's FET service. Guidance staff and coordinators provide initial assessments, mentoring and support to allow learners to access programmes at the appropriate level while also 'scaffolding' and signposting them within their centres and services to help them achieve the next steps on their learning journey. The review team heard of links formed with higher education institutions (HEIs) and other tertiary education providers that allow progression across the framework within the county, the region, and nationally as required. That said, the review team heard from HEI representatives that this was not always a straightforward process, but that, with persistence, progress was possible. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with one HEI is now (at the time of review) two years old and has allowed learner activity during Covid-19 lockdown at the National Centre for Outdoor Activities. Nonetheless, it seemed clear to the review team that developing purposeful links between the ETB and HEIs is not a short-term endeavour, but one that requires dedicated time, a clear and mutually agreed target, and dedicated staff time.

The review team agrees that the development of an admissions policy for the Kerry College campus is a significant step towards standardising access to programmes across the integrated campus. The review team is of the view that careful consideration should be given to the consultation process when implementing the admissions policy, ensuring it is consistently enabling Kerry's diverse learner population. The review team encourages Kerry ETB to review the policy in such a way as to support input from the various stakeholders on which the policy has an impact.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The review team noted from the SER that the FET Quality Council approved a policy for RPL in 2020 (p 33 of SER). The review team met with a learner who participated in the RPL programme who commented that they "found it very good" and was highly supportive of Kerry ETB. The review team noted the learner was both a focused and an independent learner. More broadly RPL gives adult learners a stepping-stone to further their careers and provides pathways back to and through education and could be particularly valuable in the context of tackling labour market pressures, such as, for example, those in the construction sector.

The review team encourages Kerry ETB to maintain its strong focus on RPL and engage and support with those already in employment to gain qualifications for their experience and ensures the opportunities RPL offers is widely advertised across the county.

Commendations

- The review team commends the Kerry ETB for its strategic approach in establishing the Kerry College model.
- The review team commends the work of Kerry ETB staff in providing access to programmes for diverse learner populations.
- The review Team commends Kerry ETB for its work to date on RPL.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB engage and consult widely in reviewing the Kerry College Admissions policy, ensuring it meets the programme entry requirements of all awards offered by the ETB and includes a transparent appeals process. This should be with a view to adopting an inclusive, consistent and enabling approach to admissions across all FET programmes, colleges, and centres, recognising the diverse learner populations in the county.
- The review team recommends the ETB explore the use of both accredited and experiential Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to allow for advanced entry and programme module exemptions so that those in employment have an opportunity to gain qualifications.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

The review team finds from the review-visit that the introduction of sectoral assessment procedure resources has been of benefit to staff and learners within the ETB in creating a consistent model and framework for the awards and qualifications that learners achieve. Ensuring the integrity of the awards it offers is crucial to the ETB and is reflected in the Quality Assurance governance model which is used to bring continual improvements to the programmes and awards offered. The review team welcomes that approach.

The review team heard that initiatives and training sessions for staff on plagiarism have been of particular relevance to learners and apprentices, undertaking programmes that will lead to both employment and progression. The use of feedback from the authenticators, who record learner evidence from across the various centres and campuses to inform practitioner professional development, is important to increase the level and standards of assessment within the programmes conferred.

The review team considers that the current Covid-19 mitigation measures available to Kerry ETB present an opportunity to design and introduce alternative approaches to assessment as well as

accessible approaches to measuring learning outcomes. Along with the further development by Communities of Practice in assessment instrument design, this will directly benefit the ETB's diverse learner population.

The review team also considers that the centralised authentication process allows impartiality in assigning authenticators across Kerry ETB's 19 centres. This centralised approach could be replicated in consolidating Results Approval Panel (RAP) meetings across the centres, driving further consistency and standardisation of awards.

The use of information and certification data presented at the Results Approval meetings, together with the consideration of trends and analysis of the authentication process, would help the ETB inform their decision making when selecting which programmes and courses to offer. In 2021, 2,881 QQI awards were issued by the Kerry ETB across its 19 centres. Business Administration and Law as well as Health and Welfare have consistently been the two of the most popular learning areas when seeking certification across the ETB's FET centres⁶. The review team considers it would be worthwhile for Kerry ETB to investigate the correlation between progression and employment opportunities within these respective fields of learning.

Commendation

- The review team commends Kerry ETB's commitment to ensuring and maintaining the integrity of the assessment processes; its systematic, consultative approach in introducing the assessment regulations within the QA Governance structures and the continued use of workshops and resources for staff and students in supporting academic integrity.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that learner induction includes alerting learners and staff to the risks of plagiarism. In this context, the support available to learners should include help with academic writing and guidance on assignments.
- The review team recommends that clear terms of reference are published within the Quality Assurance manual for the role of the Results Approval Panels in the approval and ratification of assessment results. These should be comprehensive and include the approval of all awarding bodies.

⁶ QQI Infographics: <https://infographics.qqi.ie/Provider/Details/PG00110>

- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB develops a systemic approach to using certification data to contribute to the effective quantitative measurement of programme success levels in addition to the qualitative details available in external authenticator reports.

Information and Data Management

The review team finds that there could be improvements in the use of existing Kerry ETB statistical data, which could be better captured and integrated into the self-evaluation process and SER. At a minimum the ETB should explore how best to use existing statistical data for self-evaluation.

During the review visit, the review team heard that, similar to other ETBs, Kerry ETB has begun to use the reporting capability available through the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS). With increased demographic information available, it is now possible for Kerry ETB to use learner data inform their strategic goals and support progress towards targets outlined in the Strategic Performance Agreements.

Programme performance data on learner retention and completion, certification outcomes and destination data on progression and employment outcomes are recorded in the PLSS system. The information and data recorded within the PLSS is augmented by ETB policies for Data Protection and GDPR which help protect the processing of learner data within the system.

The review team noted during the review visit that the data recorded in the PLSS and data recorded and uploaded into the QQI system did not align. As reported by staff during the site visit, data entry is completed in both systems but for different purposes, as award achievement in the PLSS has different interpretations. Although these issues are not confined to Kerry ETB, if the ETB is to continue to report within PLSS on key outcomes such as certification, the review team encourages the establishment of robust and comprehensive policies and procedures to support the consistent recording of data within PLSS.

Consistent with the requirements of QQI's regulations on quality assuring assessment, the data entered into the QQI Business System (QBS) follows a clear set of procedures ensuring that certification outcomes are recorded in a standard and consistent form across all centres. However, the review team heard during the review visit that if this data is cross-referenced by ETB staff against the PLSS reports, a variance is sometimes evident.

The review team noted a desktop audit of data relating to the Regional and National Tour Guiding programmes was undertaken. Data cross-referenced between the PLSS and QBS systems helped inform a proposed approach to investigating trends and how the programme could be benchmarked across various providers and locations. This analysis of data, including learner dropout rates (and the reasons for same) along with learner achievement, should be a fundamental part of the programme review process in line with the requirements of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance guidelines.

The review team finds that there could be improvements in the use of existing Kerry ETB statistical data, which could be better captured and integrated into the self-evaluation process and SER. At a minimum the ETB should explore how best to use existing statistical data for self-evaluation

Commendation

- The review team commends the ETB-wide approach to the use of data and information in monitoring and reviewing provision, while ensuring compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of Data Protection and GDPR.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that policies and procedures are developed for the use of data to help support programme review, alongside self-evaluation and monitoring. This will help to inform provision planning and benchmarking against key performance indicators including socio economic data sources (e.g., Pobal, HP Deprivation Index).

Public Information and Communication

Kerry ETB, as stated in the SER, adheres to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (2014) and publishes information on its organisational structures, businesses processes, plans and services routinely, as part of normal business activity. Kerry ETB publish all minutes of the Board of Kerry ETB as well as the membership of the Board.

The Director of FET has overall responsibility for information contained in Kerry College e-prospectus, brochures issued by Kerry College and FET Centres; and for information contained in publications and Quality Assurance Unit documents. The review team was impressed by the range of material promoted via this route, and the accessibility if provided to prospective learners. The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring all information relating to QA policies and procedures and ensuring that they are updated in line with QQI requirements.

As outlined in the SER, Kerry ETB hosted a workshop attended by fifty-eight employees to consider a new customer service charter. The aim was to outline service levels customers could expect as well as mechanisms for customer feedback, aimed at improving the ETB's services. Hosting further similar workshops for staff across the organisation would benefit the ETB and formalise procedures and processes by further strengthening the ETBs learner-centred mission and vision.

The SER noted that an annual report from the FET Quality Council, and schedule for publishing new material and updating the Quality Assurance pages has yet to be established.

During the site visit the review team heard reference to the use of IT systems and internal staff communications. However, no specific policy or procedure was available for internal or external communications. Moreover, during the team's consideration of self-evaluation, monitoring and review the review team also heard from members of Kerry ETB's QA Governance structures who recognise the need for improving communication and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders in the process of self-evaluation, SER development and the wider quality cycle. As some respondents at interviews suggested: "What could be improved is maybe down through the organisation there are people who don't understand the process." Other respondents and the observations of review team through the visit further confirm this statement.

The QA Governance Structure, in collaboration with the Quality Unit, works on assuring internal and external stakeholders' awareness on QA procedures in the ETB through:

- the QA manual, testimonials by learners, relationships with industry, CPD;
- training staff on self-evaluation and quality assurance via the QA Handbook, listening to external stakeholders, supporting new staff and similar (Meeting minutes Session 11 – QA Unit, 1.12.2021).

However, the review team is of the opinion that involving staff, learners, third parties, industry, and community representatives in providing Kerry ETB with feedback is not enough. The review team

think those voices should be helped, individually, to understand the critical role they have in putting a constructive challenge to the ETB. Doing so would enhance their role as providers of feedback but also provide development as informed, active and supported members of different working groups and boards, contributing to QA and development of Kerry ETB in all phases of the quality cycle. Participation of these stakeholders in working groups and boards is already happening (although more can be done), but these representatives need to be helped better to understand their role in development, improvement and decision-making. A specific policy on public information and communications would help the ETB go beyond detailing programme information and allow promotion to internal and external stakeholders of its wider Quality Assurance system and Handbook.

Commendation

- The review team commend the consolidated approach to admissions and the marketing and communications of courses available within the Kerry College Campus.

Recommendation

- The review team recommend the creation of a 'Public information and Communications' policy in line with the QQI core guidelines to support the publication of programme information and quality assurance reporting in clear and accessible formats available to learners, staff, and external stakeholders; and that the Quality Assurance Handbook should be promoted, and available to all staff and relevant stakeholders, including collaborating providers.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Learning Environment

Kerry ETB provided the review team with a well-produced Provider Profile and Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which stated that the ETB provides opportunities for learners to engage across seven streams of further education and training. These include Kerry College Apprenticeships, part-time programmes, Youthreach/CTC, Pathways, adult literacy and community education.

There are Kerry College campuses in Listowel, Tralee, Killorglin and Killarney. There are also Kerry College Hubs in Causeway, Dingle, Caherciveen, Waterville and Kenmare. There is an Admissions Office in Tralee.

As the review team have noted, this inaugural review was conducted virtually using MS Teams, and review team members did not have the opportunity to visit any centres.

Learner Experience

In its Self-Evaluation Report (SER), Kerry ETB noted that a uniform system for capturing learner feedback was introduced in 2019, using a single evaluation form across centres. An evaluation template based on 14 questions (requiring both a quantitative and narrative response) and administered through MS Forms was used in June 2020 for capturing learner feedback in relation to teaching, learning and assessment against the backdrop of the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions. A further online survey was also designed specifically for apprenticeships. The first survey had a response rate of 50% (229 learners), while the survey for apprentices had a response rate of 27% (29 apprentices). An online survey targeting teaching and instructing staff was opened over February to March 2020 with 168 responses. The survey was followed by four focus group discussions to capture staff's views on the teaching and learning environment; this involved 39 participants. Feedback included:

- Participants from Youthreach Centres highlighted that in some cases, the home-based learning environment (where the learner is using an online learning platform) is unsuitable for learning.
- Face-to-face interactions provides a more supported learning experience and was of particular value for those learners with additional learning needs.
- Kerry College participants pointed to the value for learners in knowing their own level of digital literacy ahead of engaging with course material.

- The challenges and advantages of the virtual learning environment were discussed.

The review team is of the opinion that engagement with a wider range of stakeholders, such as employers and centre managers, and learners in rural and remote areas, would have enhanced the feedback process.

Irish Language – Learner Experience

The Irish language gained full and working status in the European Union in January 2022. This will strengthen the relationship between citizens and EU administration systems. Together with the Official Languages Act (2003) and the Official Languages (Amendment) Act (2021) signed by the President of Ireland, the role of the Irish language has now been significantly strengthened.

An Coimisinéir Teanga is appointed by the President of Ireland on the advice of Government following a resolution passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas recommending the appointment.

Kerry ETB submitted a Scéim Teanga / Irish language Scheme to the Comisinéir Teanga in 2016 and more recently in 2020. Following an audit on the Implementation of the commitments in their Irish language scheme Kerry ETB was granted an overall rating of Grade 1 – Fully compliant.

The Official Languages Act (Amendment) Bill (2019) was enacted in December 2021. Part of this act includes confirmation that a deadline will be set whereby all state services in Gaeltacht regions will be available through Irish.

In its provider profile, Kerry ETB states that traditional Irish culture and Gaeltachtaí are settings where language, heritage and culture underpin everyday life. Many areas of the Gaeltacht are in very remote, rural parts of the county. Notably, County Kerry has the biggest Gaeltacht area in Munster.

In its Self-Evaluation Report (SER), Kerry ETB identified 19 FET Priorities for 2021 (p 16), including the development of a new Kerry College Irish Language Provision Unit. The review team was unable to assess how far this ambition has progressed, but Kerry ETB confirmed:

“The Provision is titled “FET Irish Language provision” and there is currently a full-time member of staff engaged in the process who is delivering TEG in Dingle town. Additionally, there is a panel of Irish language tutors with six tutors and an additional 20 awaiting Garda Vetting.”

Kerry ETB learners include native Irish speakers, learners who want to learn through the medium of Irish and those who want to learn the language. The review team noted the growing number of young people completing their primary and secondary education through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas, and the potential for many of these learners to access ETB courses through Irish.

The review team met with tutors, Irish speaking learners and native Irish speakers who had completed ETB courses. The learners in Gaeltacht areas expressed the need for there to be a shift in mindset in relation to FET provision through Irish. While acknowledging the difficulty in recruiting the minimum numbers required for a course, these stakeholders would like to see a broader range of courses delivered through Irish.. One learner noted that “in the past there was an *saghas dearcadh*/type of view – “sure they can all speak English so they can attend the courses in English”. However, the learner went on to say that after a meeting with the ETB this attitude is “slowly changing”. But learners expressed disappointment “that one of the courses that was to be through the medium of Irish was delayed ... and was supposed to be accredited, but that didn’t happen”. The review team also heard that, some also felt that they should have access to courses in their own areas and in Irish, rather than having always to travel outside their areas to courses taught through English.

During their session with the review team, learners were very supportive of their tutors, but wanted more, and a better range of, courses available locally and through Irish. They specifically referred to the numbers of young leavers from the *meanscoil*/secondary school having to leave their local area to access the full range of FET options, including post-leaving certificate, and apprenticeships.

One learner spoke very positively about the *Aireachas*\mindfulness course and a *Béaloides Áitiúil* / local folklore course and confirmed that these two courses were well attended. Tributes were paid to Kerry ETB’s Irish Language Officer, who was making a real difference. A course organiser spoke about using online platforms as a means to attract learners in Gaeltachtaí in other counties and about using *Raidió na Gaeltachta* to advertise courses. This approach was successful in recruiting new learners from outside Co Kerry.

The review team also met a former meanscoil principal who highlighted a range of Irish language courses and initiatives as good examples of Irish language development within the ETB, including classes in Coláiste na Sceilg on Saturday mornings, Ciorcal Cómhra classes within the ETB, an Irish officer part funded by Údarás na Gaeltachta, the importance of Tralee as the Baile Seirbhís /Service Town under the Plean Teanga / Language Plan, carers' courses through Irish, Parents Plus courses and the provision of Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG).

During the review visit, the review team met some dynamic Irish speaking learners, full of enthusiasm, commitment and drive. These learners communicated to the review team their view that there is lack of representation of Irish speakers in the ETB. Dialogue with other stakeholders, including ETB board representatives also indicated that further improvements could be made to the ETB provision through Irish.

Kerry ETB and Oidhreacht Corcha Dhuibhne signed an agreement of cooperation in October 2020 which became effective from November 1, 2020. Kerry ETB has agreed to take on responsibility for the provision of full-time and part-time adult courses taught through Irish which had been previously provided by Oidhreacht Corcha Dhuibhne This provision will be included in Kerry ETB's FET provision and will be included in its the annual FET Service Plan submitted to SOLAS

The review team found pockets of good practice noted above in relation to Irish language provision, and areas where there have been improvements in recent years. However, the review team considers that further work is needed to ensure consistency of provision across Kerry ETB and to meet and fully to discharge their responsibility to local learners in Gaeltacht areas.

Commendation

- The review team commends the agreement signed between Kerry ETB and Oidhreacht Corcha Dhuibhne (OCD) as an important opportunity to expand the ETB's provision of Irish Language courses. The review team encourage Kerry ETB to fully to implement this agreement, and in doing so ensure reflective practice and innovative approaches are extended to other Gaeltacht areas and Irish speakers throughout Kerry.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that the ETB continues to work towards complying fully with the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, exploring further enhancement of FET services and provision through Irish in the Gaeltacht. The ETB should explore establishing a working group working with representatives from other ETB areas with a strong Gaeltacht and Irish language tradition to develop a systematic approach through which to share and enhance best practice and jointly develop provision through the medium of Irish.
- The review team recommends that the ETB develop strategic approaches to pathways that allow the growing number of young people leaving the meanscoileanna/post-primary to continue their tertiary education through the Irish language.

Assessment of Learners

Kerry ETB's SER identifies local line management structures at Kerry College and FET Centres (as managed by the FET Management Team) as being responsible for how the integrity, consistency and security of assessment instruments, methodologies procedures and records are ensured. Within Kerry College both centralised assessments, through formerly FÁS validated programmes, and locally devised assessment models are in place. Communities of Practice (COPs) across Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Administration and Animal Care Programmes were established in 2019, enabling those responsible for the assessment of learning outcomes to maintain regular contact. A further three COPs were established in 2020 for programmes in Healthcare, Childcare and Art, Craft and Design. The work of these COPs includes collaborating on how best to ensure that assessments are based on valid skills, knowledge and competencies associated with the subject area.

The review team was impressed with COP learners and tutors, and their empowered, energetic and effective approach. The review team would like to see further rollout of COPs with a particular focus on remote, rural areas to ensure equal access for learners throughout Kerry. Some learners communicated to the review team the difficulty in securing work placements and how they would like more support in obtaining such opportunities. This further reinforces the review team's view that there is a need for a systematic approach to employer engagement.

Kerry ETB has taken a holistic approach towards assessment within the FET service and, in adopting and implementing the sector-developed assessment regulations, has a solid foundation for assessment of learners in a fair and consistent manner across FET provision categories. It was evident to the review team that broad consultation had taken place with relevant staff prior to the

introduction of these. However, the involvement of learners in the process was less clear. Their voice, alongside those of industry stakeholders in the updating of assessment instruments across all programme areas (including apprenticeships) would help further strengthen the assessment review process. The ETB might also learn from the alternative approaches to assessment that were implemented during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Such approaches, coupled with further workshops on academic integrity, writing and referencing for staff and students, will lead to yet more inclusive approaches to assessment for all across the FET service.

Commendation

- The review team commends the work of the communities of practice.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that the ETB explore alternative means of assessing learners that better recognises the diversity of its student body.

Supports for Learners

Kerry ETB's SER provides detailed information on supports provided to learners with additional needs. It notes that supports are provided, across multiple centres, for learners who have needs relating to disability, wellbeing and mental health. Within each centre, a designated person, such as the course coordinator, learner support staff, manager or other named person is available to provide wellbeing support. This person acts as a first point of contact for learners who require this support. When more specialised wellbeing support is required, referrals are made to counselling support services in Kerry who respond to critical incidents when they occur. Guidance services are provided across multiple centres to assist learners to set realistic career goals and make informed career decisions.

The review team heard from learners and staff during the site-visit, that the development of soft skills amongst learners should be prioritised. Both learners and staff expressed frustration that while these skills were generally well-explained, they were not formally recorded or otherwise accredited. Teaching staff in particular felt strongly this was a gap that should be addressed. In their view, formal

recognition of soft skills would significantly enhance the confidence of learners, and act as a powerful incentive to remain in, and progress further in, learning.

Open Learning Centres that provide academic support, operate in Kerry College at Clash Campus and Listowel Campus. Monavalley Campus introduced a system of academic support modelled on the type of support provided by Open Learning Centres. Learners and tutors come together to work on particular areas in more detail. These include numeracy, structuring written responses, oral presentation skills, and basic information technology (IT) skills. Information on non-academic support and academic support is included in the Learner Handbook identified in section 3.3.1 of the SER.

In March and April 2021, an online survey was issued to learners and staff regarding learner supports. There were 132 respondents, 57% of whom were learners. The survey was followed by two focus group discussions to capture feedback on staff's views on learning support (section 3.3.2 of SER).

Participants from Kerry College spoke in the survey about the contribution of learner support to developing self-confidence; and about the embedded nature of that support, provided by all teaching staff at the college, with more targeted support provided by the Care and Learning Team. Participants from Youthreach and VTOS Centres spoke about the wider context in which learner support takes place. They identified building self-esteem and understanding how to approach challenges positively as key elements of the process. Participants also discussed how learner support is presented as a core activity within the day-to-day programme, something that is understood and identified as a universal support for every learner as part of their course and not something that was needed only for some individuals.

Figure 3. 4 | Learner Support

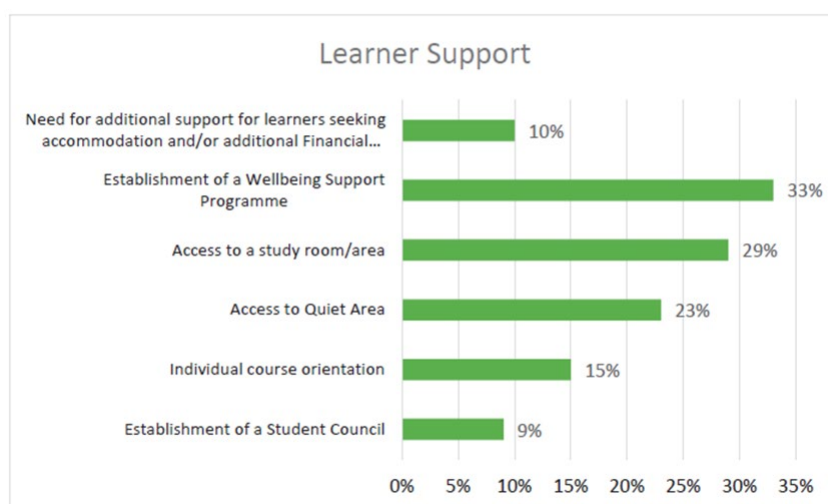


Figure 3.4 of the SER provided useful information on the support required by learners. The review team noted that the highest percentage of respondents (33%) asked for the establishment of a Wellbeing Support Programme. Kerry ETB provided a detailed breakdown showing the number of people with long lasting conditions for a variety of disabilities and impairments.

The review team met a large number of learner and tutor representatives and noted that good practice in relation to learner support and pathways for learners has become embedded. The review team was particularly impressed with the commitment and support provided by tutors right across the centres. All learners were overwhelmingly supportive of the tutors in the centres, describing them as 'going the extra mile' and providing continuing support in relation to all aspects of their course. They were highly appreciative of the digital support they received, along support with mental health and wellbeing.

To illustrate this point, the review team wishes to record some of the statements the review team heard. Some learners with whom the review team spoke were very positive in their feedback and said, "they couldn't recommend the ETB staff highly enough"; another learner said they "had fallen in love with education", and another found their course "much more than [they] expected and also "prepared [them] to run a business".

The review team heard from one board member, that:

- hearing the learner voice is essential to understanding what supports are required
- supports are needed for learners for whom English is not their first language
- support is also needed, prior to undertaking a course, in understanding referencing and plagiarism.

The review team explored with learner representatives the supports available for LGBTQI communities, people with disabilities, and learners with dyslexia. As the review team noted earlier, CPD is available to tutors to support vulnerable groups through a range of development support provided by the ETB. Professional development in using technology-enhanced learning tools, learner supports, including dyslexia awareness, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), and health and safety awareness during Covid-19 and helped to support staff throughout 2020 and 2021.

The review team commends the commitment of teaching and support staff to pursue the best outcomes for their learners. Those staff represent Kerry ETB's primary asset and are the beating

heart of the organisation's quality agenda. For example, the review team was impressed by the innovative use of mannequins delivered to learners' homes to allow completion of online skills demonstrations, the speed of the ETB's transition from in-person to online learning and the support provided through laptops for those learners otherwise without the ability to connect to the ETB.

Commendation

- The review team commends the ETB for reacting with speed and purpose to the impact on staff and learners of the Covid-19 pandemic so ensuring the best outcomes for learners.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that that Kerry ETB staff continue to be empowered and invited to lead where appropriate; their appetite for continued development being met; and their deep knowledge captured in all development and improvement work undertaken by the ETB.
- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB learn from the emerging trends in the Open Learning Centres and ensure learners outside these Centres, in more remote and rural areas including the Gaeltacht, have access to similar support.

The Travelling Community

According to the Central Statistics Office (2016), there are 968 Travellers in County Kerry, with 422 living in Tralee. The review team discussed with Kerry ETB senior management team (SMT) the issue of low educational attainment for many members of the travelling community. SMT members acknowledged this as a very important and challenging area of work and raised issues such as the difficulty in getting work placements for Travellers, the importance of role models, celebrating the education successes and achievements of Travellers, building an advocate culture, and the importance of progression routes.

The review team heard that that while participation rates have fallen, levels of success have increased. A major part of the ETB's focus is on school completion and paid summer work. Kerry ETB staff said they work with Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project (KTHCDP, a Traveller-led organisation, delivering community education programmes, where Traveller ethnicity is championed, and where Travellers are proud of their identity and actively engaged in community life) to better understand the challenges faced by this community.

Commendation

- The review team commend the ETB for driving improvements in learning success for members of the Travelling community; and encourages them to build on that success by continuing to work with partners, to understand and address the singular challenges faced by this community.

Learner Engagement

The review team noted that Kerry ETB participated in the National FET Forum in 2018. The review team, as part of the review process, sought from Kerry ETB the notes and recommendations resulting from the Forum. This was valuable material, given its production through independent, structured engagement with learners. The review team noted that Kerry ETB did not engage in 2019, 2020 or 2021 National FET Forums. The ETB outlined that this was due to Covid-19, and also highlighted they were conscious of the survey work (addressed above) as part of their self-evaluation process. Having referred to the Aontas Annual Reports 2019 and 2020, the review team noted that most ETBs did participate over that period, and the team sought clarification on Kerry ETB future plans for engagement with the Forum. The review team is of the view that this engagement would be beneficial to Kerry ETB learners and in contributing to national enhancement. Kerry ETB confirmed it intends to re-engage in this process and the review team welcomed this decision given the important role of the Forum in representing learners on a national basis.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends continuous engagement with learners and that all learner representatives across the Kerry ETBs governance structures and learner bodies (e.g. Kerry College Learner Council) are provided with full induction, training and continued support and that their roles are widely promoted among the Kerry ETB learner population.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The self-evaluation process, data gathering and development, and drafting of the SER were completed simultaneously by Kerry ETB (SER, p. 23). The review team finds this an indication of organisational management competence. Although the Inaugural Review Steering Group (IRSG) was established to undertake the self-evaluation exercise in advance of the main review visit, existing QA

governance and working groups at Kerry ETB were also engaged to participate and support the process. Self-evaluation and development of the SER was managed through collaboration between FET management structures and the QA structure, on one hand, and collaboration between three “pillars” of Kerry ETB – Boards, Schools and FET - on the other. The review team heard during the main review visit that this collaboration was assured by multiple layers of dual membership of representatives from both the FET management structure and QA structures; and by multiple layers of membership of representatives coming from all three pillars at Kerry ETB – Boards, Schools and FET. Nomination of members to the IRSG followed that principle, resulting in a “cross-staff/cross pillars” structure in the group. The QA unit summarised survey responses generated by the IRSG. The process was reported to the Quality Council, led by its independent Chair. The Quality Council was additionally supported by two sub governance groups, the Programme Governance Board and the Quality Assurance Governance Board. Drafting and final editorial work on the SER was undertaken collaboratively between the IRSG and the Kerry ETB management, however “the consultation process and its collation came through in all the structures”, and, as the review team heard during interviews, “Tight Terms of Reference, upfront planning with partners at the table and long lead-in times helped with the complex organisational structure, and that paid off”.

The review team finds it is evident from the SER and confirmed in our review sessions with representatives of governance structures and working groups, that Kerry ETB understands self-evaluation is part of wider quality assurance and quality development process. Kerry ETB does not see it as an isolated, stand-alone exercise. The review team considers this approach, placing self-evaluation into a longer timeframe and a wider context, is a further sign of maturity in understanding. The process of self-evaluation can be used to support quality assurance and development, and can be seen, in the defined strengths and recommendations for improvement under Objective 3 (SER, p. 75).

Table 4. 2 Policy on Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Policy on Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review	
Strengths	Recommendations
The Policy will be actioned in 2021 and 2022 through a review of the Commis Chef Apprenticeship Programme and the Inaugural Review of Kerry ETB	Conduct an assessment of the contribution of this policy to the quality cycle
	Strengthen the electronic management and administration systems that will monitor learners' progress, provide feedback to learners and assess their achievement

Table 4. 3 Quality Improvement Planning and Progress Reporting

Quality Improvement Planning and Progress Reporting	
Strengths	Recommendations
Improvement actions selected for 2017-2022 align with the wider strategic goals of the organisation	Continue to strengthen the connection between quality improvement planning and strategic planning and the interface between future strategic goals and quality improvement planning
	Strengthen the interface between quality reporting and updates on the progress of strategic plans
The governance system serves to improve the assessment process, bringing into focus strategic themes and issues which, in turn, lead to quality improvement	Ensure that quality improvement is informed by and responds to identified risks and emerging issues Strengthen the alignment of risk registers with teaching, learning and assessment processes

Table 4. 4 Progress Report on establishing and operating the Quality Assurance Governance System

Progress Report on establishing and operating the Quality Assurance Governance System	
Strengths	Recommendations
Specific areas of strength of the governance system have been identified	Ensure that areas that are identified as strengths are retained and enhanced within the governance system
Specific areas for further improvement of the governance system have also been identified	Ensure that areas identified for further improvement are prioritised in the Quality Improvement Plan

Table 4. 5 Programme Monitoring and Review

Programme Monitoring and Review	
Strengths	Recommendations
The planned processes for monitoring and reviewing programmes are set out in the Policy for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review	Devise and action a reporting system from the Programme Governance Board to the FET Quality Council on a) the outcomes of programme monitoring reports; and b) the progress of actions approved by the FET Quality Council
Systems are in place to monitor programme delivery outcomes across multiple centres	
Undertaking initial desk reviews and piloting module surveys has actioned particular parts of the Policy for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review	

Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with Collaborating Providers	
Strengths	Recommendations
The Flow of Reports from the National (Apprenticeship) Programme Board to the FET Quality Council shows that there is an oversight process in place	Devise and action a reporting system from the National (Apprenticeship) Programme Boards to the FET Quality Council on: a) the outcomes of monitoring reports for collaborating providers; and b) the progress of actions approved by the FET Quality Council

Table 4. 6 Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/Third Parties

Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/Third Parties	
Strengths	Recommendations
Kerry ETB (through its governance structure) has established the Programme Governance Board to oversee quality assurance in respect of programmes delivered by contracted training companies and the National Learning Network and the Community Training Centre	Devise and action a reporting system from the Programme Governance Board and Quality Assurance Governance Board to the FET Quality Council on: a) the outcomes of monitoring reports; and b) the progress of actions approved by the FET Quality Council
The effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements with the National Learning Network, and the Community Training Centre are monitored by Monavalley Campus	

The review team considers the identified strengths and recommendations related to objective 3 in the SER (above, p75-76) as highly relevant. They cover strategically important topics such as:

- the policy on self-evaluation; monitoring and review.
- Quality Improvement Planning and Progress Reporting.
- Progress Reporting on establishing and operating the QA Governance System.
- Programme Monitoring and Review; and
- Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/Third Parties.

The chosen topics show a clear vision, long-term, sustainable orientation, and a clear understanding of the priorities for further developing Kerry ETB's QA framework.

Moreover, the measures recommended in the conclusions under Objective 3 (SER, pp. 75-76) are highly relevant as they address the whole long-term oriented quality cycle and position the QA system as a tool to support the decision-making process, adopted by the management and leadership structure at the ETB, not separated as "something additional".

The review team therefore finds that the direction for further development of QA system is well defined and represents a good starting point for future long-term strategic or development plans, as well as short term action plans, measures, and developmental changes.

The review team heard during the main review visit that at the time of publishing its SER, Kerry ETB was not able to assess the contribution to the quality cycle of its Policy for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review. That policy itself is relatively new, developed in October 2020 to underpin the reporting system used by the evolving QA infrastructure of Kerry ETB (SER, p. 67). Instead, the review team heard that the ETB plans to review the policy and its contribution to the evolving QA framework after this inaugural review and the review of the Commis Chef Apprenticeship are complete. The draft Quality Assurance Handbook (Kerry ETB, QA Unit, October 2020), in which the Policy is presented, is an important supporting document which sets out the wider evolving QA framework of Kerry ETB. The review team heard from staff that they recognised the handbook as an important supportive tool for QA, although during the main review visit the team encountered some who were unfamiliar with the handbook.

The review team considers from its discussions during the review visit and analysis of the ETB's SER, that the ETB's reporting on Quality Improvement Planning and Progress Reporting, and on the Progress

Report on establishing the Quality Assurance Governance System in SER (SER, pp. 67-70 and p. 75) show deep and clear understanding of:

- all phases of the quality cycle, and their inter-connections.
- the importance of clear roles and responsibilities in governance structures; and
- the innovative added value, that could be brought by different working groups (such as working groups for teaching, learning and assessment) and other entities (for example, communities of practice) in the process of QA and development.

Kerry ETB has made progress in developing its QA framework in recent years, in crucial areas such as:

- documentation of the QA process and inter-linking different documents (such as long-term strategic goals, QIP and annual reporting on progress),
- establishing the organisational QA infrastructure and clarifying roles and responsibilities of different boards, groups and entities,
- consolidating all the phases of PDCA cycle into a substantive, coherent, and connected framework; and
- engaging internal and external stakeholders in the process, monitoring progress, and measuring outcomes.

It is clear from the SER (pp. 68-70) that Kerry ETB combines self-evaluation with external evaluation to secure deeper insight and feedback. Some forms of external evaluation are defined at the national level, such as collaboration with QQI in annual dialogue meetings, and the Inaugural Review of QA. However, the review team heard that Kerry ETB engaged external consultants in May 2021 to support further development of its QA Governance System (SER, p. 68). This decision to seek additional external evaluation reinforces the review team's view that Kerry ETB is committed to quality assurance. It was evident from discussion with ETB staff that engagement with the external consultant in May 2021 led to highly useful and relevant recommendations on establishing, operating and further developing the ETB's QA governance system; the ETB has committed to follow the recommended approach which, in the review team's view, has the potential significantly to contribute to improved performance of QA Governance Structures.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends the ETB continues to development its self-evaluation methodology, expanding target groups involved in feedback; better planning self-evaluation; evaluating new/existing programmes and assessment of learners in line with the QA Handbook; improving the data source(s) so as to complement feedback on self-evaluation findings; improving the development of evaluation tools (such as surveys/focus groups questionnaires) and statistical analysis.

Programme Monitoring & Review

Involvement of external stakeholders and learners in the QA process

The review team spoke to employer and industry representatives. They expressed a wish to engage more fully in programme development, monitoring and review by providing input on current and future labour market needs.

Additionally, the formation of a learner council within Kerry College is an important step in integrating the voice of the learner population in the development of the ETB's QA system, alongside involvement in the QA governance structure. To maximise its impact, this approach needs to be both structured and resourced.

Consortia steering groups, similar to those that formed for the commis chef and wind turbine apprenticeship, are a model that could be further explored in programme, monitoring, review and evaluation, especially within the programmes that are employer and progression focused.

Additionally, establishing a community stakeholder forum of relevant agencies would help formulate a 'bottom up' approach to provision planning, ensuring that the voice of community partners are part of the monitoring and review of ETB programmes and services.

Employer Engagement

During the review visit, the review team heard from both employers and tutors in the apprenticeship programmes of the need to up and re-skill learners to meet the demands of a changing economy, specifically in the context of a significant expansion in housebuilding, and the capital development arising from 'retro-fitting' measures to address the climate challenge. SOLAS is the lead provider for the craft apprenticeships and Kerry ETB is a second provider. In these discussions the review team heard a clear message that there were insufficient numbers of skilled tradespeople to meet demand. In similar discussion with employers, the review team heard about the need for the ETB to increase and diversify its levels of employer engagement. The importance of this engagement cannot be overstated, and the review team has some concern over Kerry ETB's level, breadth and quality of engagement with employers. At a time of significant and rapid change driven by technology, and disruption, including that caused by Covid-19, sustained, symbiotic partnerships with employers can boost programme capacity, align course curriculum, provide professional development opportunities and inform course content. For example, a strong and purposeful connection with employers across the sectors in the county and nationally could, increase learners' awareness of future employment opportunities; provide the skills required to meet the changing demands of industry; provide a valuable alternative to higher education and attract employers to new apprenticeship programmes established in recent years.

The review team did not see or hear sufficiently strong evidence to suggest Kerry ETB has an impactful employer engagement policy in place. The review team noted examples of industry involvement in traineeships and apprenticeships in sectors such as hospitality and wind turbines from dialogue with sector representatives during the review week. Nonetheless, the review team concluded that the importance of systematic and sustained employer engagement was not matched by a clear and compelling policy that demonstrated the ETB's overall connection with industry. Such a policy would bring particular benefit to the ETB's provision of education relating to tourism, given the importance of the sector in Kerry, notwithstanding the significant impact of Covid-19.

In addition, neither the review team, nor members of staff with whom the review team spoke, were aware of the establishment of a discrete employer engagement office within the Kerry ETB despite the facility being developed and promoted both internally and externally. The review team suggests that the ETB develops a clear strategy for the systematic engagement, development and growth of employer partnerships drawing on the widest range of sectors and businesses of all sizes.

In the absence of a strong and coherent employer engagement policy, there is a risk that course curriculum is not fully informed by the continuing and changing needs of regional employers and that

the design of important modules of learning, at a time of volatility and uncertainty, takes place without the input of industry.

Similarly, strong employer engagement brings the benefit of allowing Kerry ETB to inform employers the provision they offer, and the support it can provide to business growth. For example, the review team were impressed by the 'Skills to Advance' discussed during the review visit.

Strong employer engagement can also be a means of delivering direct benefits to the ETB in supporting career advice, providing work experience opportunities, and more generally promoting its provision. In addition, local employers can be crucial in helping learners to develop entrepreneurial and enterprising behaviours that will be crucial in navigating and succeeding in the dynamic labour market that ETB leavers will enter.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

The Review Team considers that the ETB has a clear and structured approach to managing its relations with, and the performance of, its delivery partners. The review team heard from a number of these providers and with ETB staff and were told that each provider submits a business plan, which forms the basis for discussion between the provider and the ETB. The plan is revisited and reviewed on a quarterly basis. There is a similarly clear approach to monitoring visits, involving bi-annual site visits (in which feedback is provided), supplemented by less formal visits featuring engagement with learners, and for example, validation of attendance records. The ETB audits qualifications of provider staff, and through maintaining dialogue ensure that providers remain aligned with Kerry ETB's mission and strategy. An officer from SOLAS explained a clear process through which it helps support the ETB in ensuring its provision is both relevant and current to employers. Finally, a different provider described to us his focus on aligning with the ETB's vision and strategy. To them, this meant remaining learner-centred, inclusive with regards to progression to employment and further education and maintaining integrity of assessment.

The ETB also works closely with, and supports, community providers in developing new courses, identifying educational needs, quality assuring performance, helping with providers' professional development, and supporting learners in continuing education in other parts of the ETB. It also helps pilot new courses and ensures that learner voice is heard in course evaluation. The review team considered the ETB's approach to be a supportive one (individual staff at the ETB were often cited as

providing crucial support to community provision). This in turn reinforced the positive approach to their learners displayed by community staff whose commitment, supportive attitude, flexibility, openness, availability and expertise was repeatedly mentioned. Community providers indicated to the review team that they feel supported by their ETB counterparts. The review team noted several areas of good practice:

- courses are open to all,
- providers are inclusive, aware of the importance of safe, supportive, nurturing, individualised, and facilitative learning environments,
- students develop self-confidence to continue studies in further courses, and the ETB is alert to the needs of students of Community providers and reacts accordingly.

However, the review team should also record that community providers felt they were not deeply engaged in developing the ETB's SER for this inaugural review, and that the ETB's strategy statement was not identified during the interviews supporting the drafting of the SER. Instead, the majority of staff saw the SER only as preparatory reading ahead of the review

Finally, while one interviewee described the "QA side of things" as "very high" they felt greater engagement, such as through a forum for second providers to talk to the QA training standards officer, would be helpful.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that Kerry ETB develop a policy and approach to Stakeholder Engagement to help develop and improve the QA system; this should allow a wide variety of voices to contribute feedback and suggestions for improvements on all phases of the quality cycle, and all matters relating to the learner experience.



Section

4

Conclusions

Section 4: Conclusions

Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

The review team concludes that Kerry ETB exhibits a strong commitment to systematic QA and development, realised through an evident commitment to the development of an effective QA framework. The review team is of the opinion that the framework system is consistent with QQI guidelines and other internationally recognised QA models and addresses governance and leadership; whole organisational structure (third parties and collaborating providers included); the main services, (in the ETB's case, teaching, learning, assessment and support to learners, and programmes of education and training); staff recruitment and professional development; information and data management; public relations, information and communication. All this is brought together with a process to quality assure the QA system, process and procedures themselves

On the basis of the review team's evaluation of procedures, the ETB's evaluation methods, established QA governance structure and documentation supporting the QA cycle, the review team recognised that the ETB has demonstrated procedural and methodological knowledge, skills, and competencies on QA and its development. The review team considers that the ETB's QA system, including its procedures, is well structured and implemented and that Kerry ETB has a clear vision for its further development.

The review team encourages the ETB to continue its short and long-term plans on that matter. This includes reflection on the new Policy on Self-evaluation and monitoring and review on the basis of experience and feedback from this inaugural review (as reflected in the SER). The review team saw evidence of self-awareness in both the SER and site visits, and through analysis of material on the ETB's website including

1. Executive Self-Evaluation Report for Kerry Education and Training Board from 2017: available at: [Executive self-evaluation report \(kerryetb.ie\)](#)
(conclusions on page 46)
2. Quality Improvement Plan For October 2017 To December 2022, published in June 2021, available at [Kerry-ETB-Quality-Improvement-Plan-2017-to-2022.pdf \(kerryetb.ie\)](#)

3. Kerry Education Training Board Education and Training Strategy 2018-2022, available at [KerryETBEducationandTrainingStrategy2018-2022English-1.pdf](#)

The ETB's QA governance structure recognises challenges which need to be addressed. Recommendations for improvement are clear and systematically addressed in Kerry ETB's SER and strategic plans. The review team suggest these priorities to improve also include plans for systematic development of stakeholder relationships and ensuring the active participation in all QA processes and governance arrangements of diverse voices. These are including but not limited to learners, staff, representatives from industry, and representatives of vulnerable and under-represented communities.

Finally, it was apparent to the review team that the support of QQI, specifically through annual dialogue meetings, and the advice and support from the ETB's external consultant, has helped steer Kerry ETB through its establishment. The further development of QA frameworks and external evaluations such as this inaugural review have also contributed to the improvement process,

Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

At the outset, the review team wishes to once again record its appreciation of the efforts made by ETB staff to continue to engage and support learners throughout an unprecedented period of disruption to education, and wider society. It was clear to the team that teaching staff went above and beyond to ensure that learners remained at the centre of their efforts and that, notwithstanding some difficulties in some home-learning environments, the experience of those learners was as positive as circumstances allowed. This required both a flexibility of approach and considerable resilience on the part of teaching staff as they coped with their own circumstances, as well as that of their learners. It is no exaggeration to say that the impact of that commitment has been, in some circumstances, to preserve life chances - as the review team heard from various learners during our interview.

Beyond that point, the review team welcomed the wide range of provision on offer, and the ETBs lead role in the development of innovative apprenticeship programmes is notable. That said, the team is of the view that the ETB needs to redouble its efforts to secure input from the apprentice and employer throughout its governance frameworks; and to review its approach to employer and wider stakeholder

engagement with a view to making it more systematic and inclusive. Finally, the review team suggest that the ETB should consider the extent to which its approach to serving rural communities and other harder to reach groups might be further developed; and to further develop its approach to delivering Irish language.

The review team noted arrangements for securing feedback from learners, in particular, the adoption in 2019 of a uniform system for capturing learner feedback via a single evaluation form across centres. In addition, the review team noted positively the use of online surveys designed for apprenticeships and, separately, for teaching and instructing staff, followed up by focus group discussions to refine and capture staff's views on the teaching and learning environment. The review team saw these interventions as indicative of a desire on the part of the ETB to secure informed insights on the success of its learning and teaching environment. In a similar vein, the review team noted that Kerry ETB participated in the National FET Forum in 2018. but had not done between 2019 and 2021. The review team were pleased to hear the Chief Executive's commitment that the ETB would re-join the FET Forum.

Kerry ETB's provides detailed information on supports provided to learners with additional needs, noting supports provided, across multiple centres, for learners who have needs relating to disability, wellbeing and mental health. Guidance services are provided across multiple centres to assist learners to set realistic career goals and make informed career decisions. The review team noted the work the ETB had undertaken with Traveller communities. This was important to providing outreach to a cohort of learners that face particular and often singular challenges, in addition to providing sustained engagement with this cohort in collaboration with other community organisations and agencies.

The review team noted the Communities of Practice (COPs) across Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Administration and Animal Care Programmes, Healthcare, Childcare and Art, Craft and Design. The work of these COPs includes collaborating on how best to ensure that assessments are based on valid skills, knowledge and competencies associated with the subject area. The review team was impressed with COP learners and tutors, and their empowered, energetic and effective approach. The review team would like to see further rollout of COPs with a particular focus on remote, rural areas to ensure equal access for learners throughout Kerry.

Apprenticeships

Kerry ETB has been at the forefront in developing the next generation of occupation-specific apprenticeships, and has achieved significant experience in scoping, developing, validation and delivery through its development of the Commis Chef apprenticeship.

During the review week, collaborative partners, industry stakeholders, and practitioners (all members of the programme board or Consortium Steering Group) spoke of the sound basis for the Commis Chef programme and how this coordinating group will help to monitor and improve the current and future iterations and revisions of the programme. The forthcoming development of the Wind Turbine Maintenance Apprenticeship will add a further national occupational specific apprenticeship programme.

RPL gives adult learners a stepping-stone to further their careers and provides pathways back to and through education. It is particularly valuable in the context of tackling labour market pressures. The review team welcome the ETB's RPL policy and encourage the ETB further to develop its approach.

The review team noted the extent to which the ETB's existing provision is aligned to the likely changes in labour market demand in the decade ahead. Provision planning based on analysis of future skills needs and learner demand will be essential in that period. In Objective 2, the review team has identified a number of sector-specific considerations, including agri-food, horticulture, mariculture and fishing, to which the ETB might have regard. The review team have also noted profound implications for learning and skills posed by the climate challenge particularly for the agriculture and construction sectors.

The review team did not see or hear sufficiently strong evidence to suggest Kerry ETB has an impactful employer engagement policy in place. The review team noted strong examples of industry involvement in traineeships and apprenticeships in the hospitality and wind turbines sectors. Nonetheless, the review team concluded that the importance of systematic and sustained employer engagement was not matched by a clear and compelling policy that demonstrated the ETB's overall connection with industry. Such a policy would bring particular benefit to the ETB's provision of education relating to tourism, given the importance of the sector in Kerry, notwithstanding the significant impact of Covid-19. In the absence of a strong and coherent employer engagement policy, there is a risk that course curriculum is not fully informed by the continuing and changing needs of regional employers and that the design of important modules of learning, at a time of volatility and uncertainty, takes place without the input of industry.

Similarly, strong employer engagement brings the benefit of allowing Kerry ETB to inform employers the provision they offer, and the support it can provide to business growth. For example, the review team were impressed by the 'Skills to Advance' discussed during the site-visit.

Deeper employer engagement can also be a means of delivering direct benefits to the ETB in supporting career advice, providing work experience opportunities, and more generally promoting its provision. In addition, local employers can be crucial in helping learners to develop entrepreneurial and enterprising behaviours that will be crucial in navigating and succeeding in the dynamic labour market that ETB leavers will enter.

Irish Language

The review team is aware that the Official Languages Act (Amendment) Bill (2019) was enacted in December 2021. Part of this will require that all state services in Gaeltacht regions will be available through Irish. Alongside the Irish language gaining full and working status in the European Union in January 2022, the role of the Irish language is significantly strengthened. Kerry ETB states that County Kerry has the biggest Gaeltacht area in Munster. All this means that the level and reach of Irish language provision, particularly in Gaeltacht areas, needs to be increased and enhanced in partnership with Gaeltacht representatives. The review team is of the view that the scale of effort required will be better undertaken on a collaborative basis with other ETBs also with significant Gaeltacht communities.

The review team also thinks it important that Kerry ETB considers the distinct needs of Irish speaking learners, learners who want to learn through the medium of Irish, and those who want to learn the language. The review team also note the growing number of young people completing their primary and secondary education through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas, and the potential for many of these learners to access ETB courses through Irish.

In this context, the review team welcomes the ETB's appointment of an Irish Language Officer. The review team see this appointment as significantly strengthening the profile and priority of Irish across the county. The review team welcome the agreement signed between Kerry ETB and Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne.

Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The review team found that the ETB's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) formed an excellent basis for the inaugural review. The team noted that the foundation of its QA framework was informed by QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines and its Sector-Specific QA Guidelines for the ETB sector. There was a particular focus placed on governance arrangements and consideration given to what was in place, and what requirements emerged from the QA Guidelines. The multi-layered governance structure, which aims to provide connections between centres and the ETB governance, is important. More recently, the ETB's Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) 2017-2022, and its Education and Training Strategy 2018-2022, along with annual service plans and reports, build on this solid foundation. While the QA governance structure appears complex, roles are defined with clear Terms of Reference, and the reporting system is similarly consistent with QQI guidance.

As noted in the body of this report, members of the governance structures recognise the need for improving collaboration with internal and external stakeholders in the process of self-evaluation, echoing our recommendations elsewhere on the capacity to improve such engagement, and the priority of doing so on a systematic and evolving basis.

4.4 Commendations

1. The review team commends Kerry ETB on the development of well researched and produced, Provider Profile and Self-Evaluation Reports.
2. The review team commends Kerry ETB for the significant effort it has devoted to creating and implementing QA Governance Structures, Groups and the appointment of an Independent Chair to its Quality Council.
3. The review team commends the evidence of a continuing and evolving quality culture at the ETB.
4. The review team commends the adoption of additional self-evaluation methods, combining surveys and focus groups to strengthen the objectivity and validity of feedback.
5. The review team commends the organisation of the self-evaluation process, planned a year ahead, implemented by different groups of the QA governance structure, and monitored by Kerry ETB management and the Quality Council.

6. The review team commends the positive and timely response to the self-evaluation findings, addressing the conclusions with relevant measures, and planned in the SER recommendations.
7. The review team commends the policy on Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review, laid out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.
8. The review team commends the systematic approach adopted to staff recruitment, management and development and the range of development opportunities the ETB make available to its staff.
9. The review team commends Kerry ETB for the development and expansion of the Commis Chef and Wind Turbine apprenticeships and for taking a lead nationally in these programmes.
10. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB ensures meaningful learner involvement in the governance components of the Apprenticeship Programmes.
11. The review team commends the Kerry ETB for its strategic approach in establishing the Kerry College model.
12. The review team commends the work of Kerry ETB staff in providing access to programmes for diverse learner populations.
13. The review team commends Kerry ETB for its work to date on RPL.
14. The review team commends Kerry ETB's commitment to ensuring and maintaining the integrity of the assessment processes; its systematic, consultative approach in introducing the assessment regulations within the QA Governance structures and the continued use of workshops and resources for staff and students in supporting academic integrity.
15. The review team commends the ETB-wide approach to the use of data and information in monitoring and reviewing provision, while ensuring compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of Data Protection and GDPR.
16. The review team commend the consolidated approach to admissions and the marketing and communications of courses available within the Kerry College Campus.
17. The review team commends the agreement signed between Kerry ETB and Oidhreacht Corcha Dhuibhne (OCD) as an important opportunity to expand the ETB's provision of Irish Language courses. The review team encourage Kerry ETB to fully to implement this

agreement, and in doing so ensure reflective practice and innovative approaches are extended to other Gaeltacht areas and Irish speakers throughout Kerry.

18. The review team commends the work of the communities of practice.
19. The review team commends the ETB for reacting with speed and purpose to the impact on staff and learners of the Covid-19 pandemic so ensuring the best outcomes for learners.
20. The review team commend the ETB for driving improvements in learning success for members of the Travelling community; and encourages them to build on that success by continuing to work with partners, to understand and address the singular challenges faced by this community.

4.5 Recommendations

1. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB pursue a broader community of interests to ensure the ETBs approach to self-evaluation benefits from a wider range of experience, skills and knowledge and promotes shared ownership of the QA process with all stakeholders.
2. The review team recommends the ETB adopts a systematic approach to ensure the current organisational culture is adopted ETB-wide, with practical examples to help define the desired outcomes. To this end, an action plan should be established to communicate and embed the ETB vision and values at all levels.
3. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB embeds similar external representation across all of its governance groups including the Programme Governance Board and the Quality Assurance Governance Board, learners, staff, and external stakeholders such as those from industry and local communities including Gaeltacht areas, and should be among the stakeholder groups invited to participate.
4. The review team recommends that all quality assurance policies and procedures are approved by the FET Quality Council, and that the Programme Board and Quality Assurance Governance Board adhere to their defined role in developing policy and making recommendations, ensuring adherence to the appropriate approval functions outlined in the relevant Terms of Reference.
5. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB develop and implement a coherent programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff, including hourly-paid staff and

those delivering second provider contracted training. Such a programme should have clear links to the organisation's mission and strategy, and feature annual review and evaluation of impact, drawing on the views of participants.

6. The review team recommends that the programme of CPD proposed in Recommendation 5 be further enhanced with a revised policy on staff, recruitment, management and development, aligned with the goals, values, and mission of the ETB. This might include:
 - a formal induction to the organisation, including a briefing on the Kerry ETB Quality Assurance system and any specific QA requirements of the post
 - processes for staff mentoring
 - systematic recording of CPD undertaken by staff aligned to the organisation's goals, values and mission. The current policy should be applied consistently across the ETB by staff.
7. The review team recommends staff engaged in all phases of the QA cycle have the opportunity to join a Community of Practice to share learning, deepen knowledge and embed improvement.
8. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB engage and consult widely in reviewing the Kerry College Admissions policy, ensuring it meets the programme entry requirements of all awards offered by the ETB and includes a transparent appeals process. This should be with a view to adopting an inclusive, consistent and enabling approach to admissions across all FET programmes, colleges, and centres, recognising the diverse learner populations in the county.
9. The review team recommends the ETB explore the use of both accredited and experiential Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to allow for advanced entry and programme module exemptions so that those in employment have an opportunity to gain qualifications.
10. The review team recommends that learner induction includes alerting learners and staff to the risks of plagiarism. In this context, the support available to learners should include help with academic writing and guidance on assignments.
11. The review team recommends that clear terms of reference are published within the Quality Assurance manual for the role of the Results Approval Panels in the approval and ratification of assessment results. These should be comprehensive and include the approval of the results of all awarding bodies.
12. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB develops a systematic approach to using certification data to contribute to the effective quantitative measurement of programme success levels in addition to the qualitative details available in external authenticator reports.

13. The review team recommends that policies and procedures are developed for the use of data to help support programme review, alongside self-evaluation and monitoring. This will help to inform provision planning and benchmarking against key performance indicators including socio economic data sources (e.g., Pobal, HP Deprivation Index).
14. The review team recommend the creation of a 'Public information and Communications' policy in line with the QQI core guidelines to support the publication of programme information and quality assurance reporting in clear and accessible form to learners, staff, and external stakeholders; and that the Quality Assurance Handbook should be promoted, and available to, all staff and other stakeholders, including collaborating providers.
15. The review team recommends that the ETB continues to work towards complying fully with the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, exploring further enhancement of FET services and provision through Irish in the Gaeltacht. The ETB should explore establishing a working group working with representatives from other ETB areas with a strong Gaeltacht and Irish language tradition to develop a systematic approach through which to share and enhance best practice and jointly develop provision through the medium of Irish.
16. The review team recommends that the ETB develop strategic approaches to pathways that allow the growing number of young people leaving the meanscoileanna/post-primary to continue their tertiary education through the Irish language.
17. The review team recommends that the ETB explore alternative means of assessing learners that better recognises the diversity of its student body.
18. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB staff continue to be empowered and invited to lead where appropriate; their appetite for continued development be met; and their deep knowledge captured in the development and improvement work undertaken by the ETB.
19. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB learn from the emerging trends in the Open Learning Centres and ensure learners outside these Centres, in more remote and rural areas including the Gaeltacht, have access to similar support.
20. The review team recommends continuous engagement with learners and that all learner representatives across the Kerry ETBs governance structures and learner bodies (e.g., Kerry College Learner Council) are provided with full induction, training and continued support and that their roles are widely promoted among the Kerry ETB learner population.

21. The review team recommends the ETB continues to development its self-evaluation methodology, expanding target groups involved in feedback; better planning self-evaluation; evaluating new/existing programmes and assessment of learners in line with the QA Handbook; improving the data source(s) so as to complement feedback on self-evaluation findings; and improving the development of evaluation tools (such as surveys/focus groups questionnaires) and statistical analysis.
22. The review team recommends that Kerry ETB develop a policy and approach to Stakeholder Engagement to help develop and improve the QA system; this should allow a wide variety of voices to contribute feedback and suggestions for improvements on all phases of the quality cycle, and all matters relating to the learner experience.

4.6 Statements on Quality Assurance

Through analysis of available documentation and on the basis of interviews with a range of different stakeholders at Kerry ETB, the review team recognises the ETB's considerable progress in its approach to quality assurance over the last four years. The review team consider Kerry remains a young organisation, established in July 2013. It started to build a systematic approach to QA and development in 2017 with its Executive Self-Evaluation Report, aided by QQI guidelines. The ETB's Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) 2017-2022, developed as a result of that self-evaluation in 2017, is still in place and is guiding the QA and development process.

The ETB has put in place an annual reporting system to monitor the implementation of, and progress on improvement. Many strategic goals rooted in the assessment and conclusions of the 2017 self-evaluation have been achieved; for example, the review team can confirm that the plan in the 2017 Executive SER for "establishing a Quality Council with some external membership to have oversight at provider level and authority informed by a number of governance groups which will have a recommendation role in respect of key quality areas" has been delivered.

The ETB's SER confirms Kerry has not confined itself to nationally prescribed external evaluation and feedback, but is actively seeking additional supplementary material, engaging external consultants in May 2021 to that end (SER, p. 68). The review team considers this evidence of a strong motivation towards for, and commitment to, quality and excellence. It is not simply the existing, mature QA system that gives the review team comfort; the additional interviews the review team undertook demonstrated an evolving quality culture that gives the review team confidence of a continuous approach to quality enhancement at Kerry ETB.

Beyond that, the review team wishes to make clear that Kerry ETB has engaged fully and comprehensively with the review team in a welcoming and courteous manner at all times. The review team had itself agreed an approach predicated on a collaborative and polite enquiry informed by evidence and challenging where necessary. The shared aim, alongside securing the assurance the review team needed to provide to QQI, was to help improve outcomes for learners. The review team was immensely grateful to QQI staff, whose broad expertise and specific technical support was invaluable.

Section

5



Section 5: ETB Review Response

Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report

BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA CHIARRAÍ
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BORD OIDEACHAIS
AGUS OILIÚNA CHIARRAÍ
KERRY EDUCATION
AND TRAINING BOARD

Kerry Education and Training Board

Response to Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance Report

Kerry ETB Further Education and Training (FET) warmly welcomes the QQI Inaugural Review Report of Kerry ETB and would like to thank both the Review Panel and QQI for the opportunity to engage in this process. It was a positive experience with clear dividends for Kerry ETB.

Kerry ETB found that both the self-evaluation and the review processes were very worthwhile. They allowed time for us to collectively reflect, celebrate our achievements, and note our evolving quality enhancement structures and processes. They also provided us with an opportunity to identify areas for future quality growth.

We warmly welcome the 20 commendations in your report and in particular the identification of our strong commitment to systematic quality assurance, consistent with QQI guidelines and internationally recognised QA models.

It is particularly of value to us that you acknowledge:

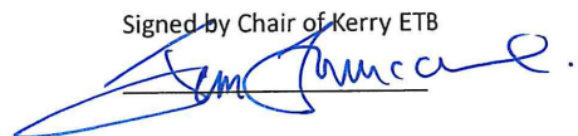
- A continuing and evolving quality culture in Kerry ETB.
- A well planned and executed approach taken to the self-evaluation and review process by Kerry ETB.
- The establishment of QA governance structures that provide a centralised and systematic approach to quality assurance across the organisation, supported by the QA Unit.
- A well-structured and well implemented QA system in Kerry ETB.
- The manner in which Kerry ETB has taken the lead nationally on apprenticeship programme development.
- The strategic approach taken with the establishment of the Kerry College model, a fully integrated FET College of the future.

Your report has provided us with much encouragement to continue with this work into the future.

You have also provided us with 22 recommendations to help us continue to enhance our approach to assuring quality in Further Education and Training in Kerry ETB. The recommendations are timely in providing us with critical information to inform the development of the Kerry ETB Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026. We particularly welcome the recommendations that orient us to continue to broaden the community of interests for shared ownership of the QA process, to develop a policy and approach for stakeholder engagement, and to extend our Communities of Practice model to continue to share learning, deepen knowledge and embed improvements. We welcome your encouragement to develop a more systematic approach to using certification data and to continue the development of our self-evaluation methodology. We are encouraged by your recommendation to provide for our continuous engagement with learners and learner representatives.

Kerry ETB would like to thank the members of the Panel for their active engagement with us and all our stakeholders, for their insightful report and for their approach of polite enquiry during the process. We also thank QQI for the support at all stages in the process and for their active engagement with us during this review.

Signed by CEO Kerry ETB


Signed by Chair of Kerry ETB


Príomhoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin : CEO
Colm Mc Evoy



EUROPEAN UNION
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Kerry ETB is committed to a greener environment

Employment | Progression | Apprenticeship



KERRY COLLEGE

of Further Education & Training



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GENERATION APPRENTICESHIP

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Apprenticeship
Real-life Learning

For further information, log on to
www.kerrycollege.ie
or contact: Kerry College – Monavalley Campus
on: 066 7149600



An Reoin Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills



SOLAS
learning works

CHARRBÁI
BOARD
MARE CULINARY SKILLS CENTRE
Officially opened by Brendan Griffin TD,
Minister of State at the Dept. of Transport, Tourism & Sport
November 2018



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

1.1.1 QCI 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 2017⁷. 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 QCI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

1.1.2 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 QCI.

1.1.3 In 2018, all sixteen ETBs completed re-engagement with QCI. 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. QCI 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.

1.1.4 As outlined in QCI'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

⁷ Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (QCI, 2019)

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

1.1.5 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.

1.1.6 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.

<p>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.</p>	<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.
<p>3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.</p>	<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. • 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.
<p>4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.</p>	<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.
<p>5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.</p>	<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
<p>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.</p>	<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;⁸
- 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 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

⁸ <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows⁹:

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:

⁹ Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.

- 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.
- 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

Step	Action	Timeframe
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
	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

Step	Action	Timeframe
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, 29th November 2021			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator(s)/Director of FET		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-11.00	1. ETB Chief Executive & SMT In earlier reviews, the first 15 Minutes have been spent with ETB CE alone with the rest of the SMT then being admitted.	CEO	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
		Director of Further Education and Training	
		Director of Organisation Support Development	
		Director of Schools, Youth and Music	
11:00-11.30am	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.30 - 11.45	Review Team Break		
11.45-12.30	2. Inaugural Review Steering Group	Director FET	Discussion of the development of the self-evaluation report
		Principal Kerry College (Clash Rd/ Listowel/ Denny St)	
		AEO	
		Manager Kerry College (Monavalley)	
		AEO	
		AEO	
		QA Unit	
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)	Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) Killarney	
		Youthreach Tralee	
		Killarney VTOS	
		Youthreach learner who has progressed to Kerry College	
		Dingle FET Centre learner (Gaeilge group)	
		Killarney Adult Literacy & Basic Education	
	Parallel session 2 (L4-5-6 learners)	Photography	
		Office Administration	
		SNA	
		ELC	
		Medical Administration	
		Healthcare Support	
2.45-3pm	Review Team Break		
3pm-3.45pm	Parallel session 3 (Apprentices & other WB learners)	Wind Turbine	
		KC Accounting Technician learners	
		Hairdressing (087 1098247)	
		IT Support Learner	
		Beauty Therapy	
		Commis Chef apprentice in Cork	
	Parallel session 4 (Past Graduates in HE or employment)	KC ATI learners	VTOS and Youthreach learners
		Commis Chef Apprenticeship'	

		Hairdressing (087 2311926)	
		Beauty Theray	
		Wind Turbine	
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)		Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
	Parallel session 1 (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learning practitioners)	Adult Literacy - Resource Workers	
		VTOS/ YR - teacher	
		ABE/ BTEI	
		Tralee Youthreach - Resource Worker	
		Killarney VTOS - teacher	
		Comm Education Programme - tutor	
	Parallel session 2 (L4- 5-6 Learning Practitioners)	Kerry College, Listowel - teacher/ QA/ TEL	
		Killarney YR - Resource Worker	
		Killarney VTOS - teacher	
		Kerry College, Tralee - teacher	
		Kerry College, Tralee - teacher	
		Kerry College, Tralee - teacher	
	Parallel session 3 (Apprenticeship & other WBL instructors)	Hairdressing - instructor	
		MAMF Apprenticeship Instructor	
		Commis Chef - instructor	
		Broadcast Production - instructor	
		Beauty Therapy - instructor	
		IT Support - instructor	
5.15pm-5.45pm	Panel Review Team Meeting		

Date: Tuesday, 30th Nov 2021

Theme: TBD (Day 2)

Time (GMT)	Group	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	Board Member Kerry College	Discussion of the learner voice om Kerry ETB Governance Structures.
		Board Member of Further Education and Training Centre	
		RPL Learner	
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: Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators - Unaccredited/level 1-3 provision	Adult Literacy & Basic Education - ALO	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		VTOS Tralee - Co-ordinator	
		VTOS South Kerry - Coordinator	
		Community Education Facilitator	
		Kenmare ABE	
		Youthreach Tralee - Co-ordinator	
	Parallel Session 2 - Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators Level 4-6 provision (including training provision)	An Tochar FET Centre - Manager	
		O'Connell FET Cente, Cahersiveen	
		Kerry College Clash - DP	

		VTOS Killarney - Co-ordinator	
		Kerry College, Monavalley Campus - Assistant Manager	
		Dingle FET Centre - Manager	
12:15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45pm-1.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.30pm	8. Second Providers (e.g. Representatives of Training Contractors, LTIs)	Kerry College, Monavalley Campus, Community Training Officer	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		National Learning Network (NLN)	
		NLN	
		Impact Training - Head of Finance, QA and Research	
		Senior Training Advisor in Kerry ETB	
		Contracted Training Officer in Kerry ETB	
		Assistant Manager. Monavalley Campus	
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)	LCETB - Collaborating providers - National Commis Chef Apprenticeship Programme	Discussion of quality assurance arrangements for collaborative programmes
		CDETb - Collaborating providers - National Commis Chef Apprenticeship Programme	
		Chairman SCG - Siemens Ghanacea	
	Parallel session 2 (Higher Education)	FIT	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs.
		Governance Committee Chair MaREI, UCC; Chair of Quality Council	
		UCC - Director of Sport and Physical Activity.	
		MTU - Head of School of Computing	
		MTU - Workplace Co-ordinator	
		MTU - Kerry ETB Board	

	Parallel session 3 (Community Providers & Groups, including representatives of Cooperation Hours)	Social Health and Education Project (SHEP)	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups
		SHEP	
		Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM)	
		Maharees Conservation Group	
		TEAM	
		Dingle Hub	
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)	Director of FET	Discussion of the relationship between the ETB's quality assurance system and its professional functions
		Head of Human Resources	
		Director of OSD	
		Head of Corporate Technology	
		Head of Finance	
		FET Learning Technology Officer	
5.30pm-6pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Wednesday, 1st December 2021			
Theme: TBD (Day 3)			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10- 10.45 parallel sessions	ETB Review Coordinator		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
	Session 11 Parallel Session 1: Childcare Community of Practice	Kerry College Principal	Discussion on the operations of a COP and the introduction of a new programme.

		Childcare COP, Kerry College	
		Childcare COP, Kerry College	
		Childcare COP, Kerry College	
		Childcare COP, Kerry College	
		QA Unit	
	Session 11 Parallel Session 2: Gaeilge Group		Discussion on the Kerry ETB commitment to the Irish language, including strategy and delivery.
		An Daingean FET Centre	
		AEO	
		Oifeageach Gaeilge	
		Admissions Unit	
		Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne.	
	Parallel Session 3: Quality Assurance Support Service Team		
		QA Unit (TSO)	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality
		QA Unit (Curriculum Development)	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15pm	12. Quality Council	Chair	Discussion of the approach to, and mechanisms for, quality assurance and enhancement
		Industry Rep	
		staff rep	
		staff rep	
		AEO	

12.15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45pm	Review Team Break		
1.45-2.30pm	13. Quality Council (or equivalent) Sub-groups (max 3 groups)		
	Parallel session 1: Programme Governance Sub-Group	Kerry College Manager	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of FET Division
		Kerry College Principal	
		Admissions Office	
		Quality Assurance Unit	
	Parallel session 2: QA Sub-Group	Director FET	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of FET Division
		AEO	
		AEO	
		AEO	
Quality Assurance Unit			
2.30pm-3pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
3:00-3:15PM	Review Team Break		
3.15PM-4PM	14. Pathways - Information Recruitment and Guidance	FET Guidance Counsellors	Discussion on Kerry ETB Pathways for Learners, recruitment of learners and adult guidance provided.
		FET Information Officers	
		Youthreach Advocate	
		Director of Schools	
		FET Manager, Work-Based Learning/IRG	
		Kerry ETB Mentorship Programme	
		Adult Guidance	
4:00-4.30PM	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.30pm-4.45pm	Review Team Break		
4.45-5.30PM	15. Heads of FET Support Services	Kerry College Principal	Discussion of the role in support services provided to learners and staff in FET
		Kerry College Learner Support	

		VTOS Killarney Learner Supports	
		TEL/ UDL	
		Adult Literacy and Basic Education	
		Kerry College Learner Support	
5.30pm-6pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Thursday, 2nd December 2021			
Theme: TBD (Day 4)			
Time (GMT)	Group	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	16. Governance Boards - FETC; Kerry College; Youthreach		Focus on FET operational governance structures
		FETC Governance Board	
		FETC Governance Board	
		Youthreach Board	
		Youthreach Board	
		Kerry College Board	
	Kerry College Board		
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15	17. Learning Practitioners (cross-section of services and programmes)	National Tour Guide	Discussion of staff involvement in programme development & review

	involved in programme development business support	National Programme Co-ordinator	
		Kerry College, Monavalley Campus	
		Kerry College, Monavalley Campus	
		Kerry College, Monavalley Campus	
		QA Unit	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.45	18. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives	Regional Skills Co-ordinator	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		Kerry SciTech	
		Vintners	
		Kerry County Council (Community & Economic Development)	
2.45-3.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
3.15-3.30	Review Team Break		
3.30-4.15	19. ETB Employer Engagement Function	Childcare Provider	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local skills needs and quality assuring provision
		Cahersiveen Community Hospital	
		Kenmare Beauty Rooms	
		Liebherr	
		OPW	
		-	
4.15-4.45	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Friday, 3rd December 2021

Theme: Wrap-up

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
9-9.30	20. Free Session		To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
9.30-10.45am	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00 - 10.45	Irish Speakers	Learners x3	
10.45-11.30	21. Free Session		To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
10.00 - 11.15	Learner Practitioners (Addition Session)	Centre Manager	
		QA Unit	
		Instructor	
		Programme Coordinator	
		Instructor	
11-11.30am	22. QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director	Director of FET and QA Unit	QQI gathers feedback on the review process (Review Team not in attendance)
11.30-12	Private Review Team Meeting		

12-12.30	23. Oral Feedback: Feedback presented by Review Team Chair. Attended by ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners	CEO	Oral feedback on initial review findings
		Director of FET	
		Director of OSND	
		Director of Schools, Youth and Music	
		Principle	
		Manager	
		AEO	
		AEO	
		AEO	
		Head of ICT	
		Head of Human Resource	
		Head of Finance	
		Instructor	
		Admissions Office	
		Learner Support	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
QA Unit			
12.30-1	Review Team Break		
1-5 .pm	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)