

QQI Review Report 2022

Inaugural Review

of Galway and Roscommon 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 Galway and Roscommon 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 2022 inaugural review of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team attended a virtual briefing and training session with QQI staff on 17 January 2022 and the virtual planning visit to Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board took place on 20 January 2022. The main virtual review was conducted by the full team via Microsoft Teams between 28 February and 4 March 2022.

Chair

Maurice de Greef is chair holder of the UNESCO Chair on Adult Education at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and realized a dissertation (PHD) about the outcomes of education. In cooperation with Maastricht University, he realised more than 130 studies in more than 200 communities and 8 countries concerning the impact and success factors of education.

He managed local, regional and European projects in innovating learning-environments, strategic policymaking in education and developing strategies for approaching learners and realising new courses in local settings.

He was member of the national board of non-formal adult education and responsible for the national conferences about adult education. Besides this he was member of the board of the national organisation for civil servants (policymakers) of education.

Coordinating Reviewer

Carol Hanney is an education consultant and served as Chief Executive of City of Dublin Education and Training Board from 2016 to 2021 leading and developing its broad range of second and further education provision. Her role also involved overseeing the national grants-awarding body, SUSI. Prior to becoming CE in CDET B she was Further Education Specialist in the Department of Education and Skills. From 2008 to 2013 she was Chief Executive Officer of Dún Laoghaire VEC and she had previously held the position of Principal of Bray Institute of Further Education from 1999 to 2008.

She holds a BA and HDip in Education from NUIG and a Master's in Education from TCD. Carol has been involved in curriculum and course development at second and at FE level and is particularly interested in quality in education. She sat on a number of NCCA committees reforming the JC and the LC, worked for a period in the TUI, and during her career she has been a member of many national education bodies and has participated in various international projects and conferences

Learner Representative

Jeremy Kennedy relocated to Donegal, the family home of his wife, in early 2018. Unsure of which direction or opportunity to pursue, he made the decision to transition from civil construction industry. Jeremy was invited to participate in Level 5 Business and Tourism Studies with Donegal Town VTOS. He found unanticipated resources and support through the ETB.

Upskilling and reskilling allowed Jeremy the chance to apply for a position within the ETB (part-time tutor, FET). Having completed the two-year course, gaining employment, and continuing to take advantage of professional development courses and career guidance he now enjoys being an active participant in the Irish education system.

Peer Expert

Nino Buić holds a University Degree from University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. He has a strong background in the field of VET having worked over 13 years in this area in Croatia as well as consultant in Southeast, Eastern Europe, and Caucasus region.

Currently holds a position of an Assistant Director for EU Affairs, International Cooperation and Projects in Agency for VET and Adult Education in Croatia. During his career he gained hands on experience related to the processes of reform and modernisation of VET System in Croatia and other European countries, organization of cooperation between social partners and VET, linking VET and Labour Market, Qualifications and NQF development, VET QA, etc.

He has experience in monitoring and follow-up of EU policies and tools in the field of Education and Training (Education and Training 2020; EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, etc.). He was project manager of various EU and other donors funded projects in Croatia. He acted as a representative of Croatia in various networks and events, i.e., Meetings of DGVT, ACVT, +ECVET UG, EQAVET, etc.

He was author and co-author of a number of articles and publication published in Croatia and EU.

Peer Expert

Helen Carroll is an educational counsellor and worked for many years with the Disability Service in the Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), formerly Dublin Institute of Technology. She is the author of the book 'A Guide to Assignment Writing', a best-seller in Ireland. She has presented at many international conferences on learning, in particular at third level.

Her background is in Science and she holds a Master's in Education. She has a strong interest in neuroscience and in how the wealth of knowledge we possess in this area can be adapted to help student improve their own learning.

Industry Representative

Joanne Sweeney is the CEO of Public Sector Marketing Pros and Digital Training Institute, host of the Public Sector Marketing Show podcast and organiser of Europe's Public Sector Digital Marketing Summit.

A skilled digital marketing consultant and trainer, Joanne's accredited programmes attract students from across the world. She is one of only 14 trainers delivering Google's Advanced Data-Driven Marketing programme to their biggest clients worldwide. She has also briefed Facebook's senior government team and has spoken at Twitter Headquarters in San Francisco on Digital Citizenship.

A former broadcast journalist, she is also a two-time author on digital communications for government and public sector agencies. Her second book Public Sector Marketing Pro has been described by former President Barack Obama's Chief Digital Officer as "the handbook I needed when in the White House, it would have saved me years of learning by error."

She holds two Master's Degrees, one in Journalism and one in Digital Marketing. Joanne's writing has been published on Social Media Examiner, the world's largest social media website and she has spoken on stages in the US, Australia, mainland Europe, the UK and Ireland.

A person wearing a red helmet and an orange high-visibility safety jacket is kneeling in a forest, working on a wooden structure. The forest floor is covered with green moss and small plants. The background shows several tall, thin trees.

Section

1

Introduction and Context

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) was established in July 2013 under the Education and Training Boards Act of 2013. This new organisation was realised through the merging of three Vocational Educational Committees (VECs): Galway City, County Galway and County Roscommon. The following year, in July 2014, the former FÁS training centre was also merged with the three Vocational Committees. GRETB manages 40 centres which include: two Community Primary Schools, 19 Post-Primary Schools, one Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) College, three Dual Provision Schools offering PLC courses, one Training Centre, seven Youthreach Centres, seven VTOS Centres and several Community Education programmes. It also funds and oversees other FET initiatives and youth services, and music education in the area. This review is specifically concerned with the quality assurance of GRETB's FET provision, and the review team recognises the diversity of programmes being provided for a wide variety of target-groups living in County Galway and County Roscommon.

GRETB is governed by a board of 21 members consisting of elected public representatives, staff representatives, parent representatives and community representatives. The Board operates in accordance with a formal schedule of reserved functions as set out in the Education and Training Board Act (2013). Its work is supported by a range of committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Finance Committee and Boards of Management. The executive functions of the Board are vested in the Chief Executive who is accountable to the Board for the due performance of those functions.

GRETB covers a large geographical area and is the second largest Education and Training Board in the country serving a population of just over 320,000 people. Galway City has a population of 78,688 (CSO, 2016) and is the fourth largest city in the Republic of Ireland. The ETB covers areas of urban population and extensive rural areas. It encompasses the largest Irish speaking area (Gaeltacht) in the country which is situated west of Galway City. It also provides services on the four inhabited islands off its western coast. The promotion of the Irish language was evident in the self-evaluation report (SER) and also in conversations with staff and learners during the review week. Galway City has two higher education institutions (HEIs): National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and Atlantic Technological University (encompassing the former Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology and Letterkenny Institute of Technology). The ETB has built up strong relationships with both institutions, as was evidenced in the SER and during the review week. The area has a rich cultural heritage, strong economy and a vibrant tourism industry.

Relative to the national unemployment rate of 12.9%, the unemployment rates in this region appear comparable, with rates of 11.7% in County Galway, 13% in County Roscommon and 12.9% in Galway City. The deprivation rate in County Roscommon is lower than in County Galway, it is -2.36 , and in County Galway it is 1.81 . Most of the primary categories of employment are medical device manufacturing, Information Communications Technology (ICT) manufacturing, agriculture/forestry/fishing, health, tourism, wholesale and retail. During the review sessions with the industry and employer representatives, it became clear that GRETB responds accurately to the demands of the regional labour market by developing educational programmes for these different sectors.

Annually, GRETB has 23,367 learners joining further education and training (FET) courses provided across the 40 centres in County Galway and Roscommon. These learners take part in both full and part-time programmes across Levels 1 to 6 of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). In addition, mature learners have the opportunity to join unaccredited programmes, focusing on Core Personal General Learning provided by the Basic Education and Community Education centres. During the review sessions, the review team recognised the significant focus on learner support provided for the different groups of learners on the different NQF levels, with a special focus on vulnerable learners.

Figure 1: Location of the different GRETB centres¹



¹ Galway and Roscommon Self-evaluation Report (SER), p12

The self-evaluation report (SER) was carried out during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the QQI virtual site visit took place as the country was emerging from restrictions and face-to-face classes had resumed. It was evident from the SER (page 14) and during the review week that, when educational facilities were closed in March 2020, the ETB had responded rapidly and professionally to this new challenge. Education provision moved to remote delivery, new pedagogical methodologies were developed, and staff were upskilled in the use of technology. The review team commends the ETB for the manner in which the FET Support and Development Unit through its Technologically Enhanced Learning (TEL) department worked to upskill staff, and the manner in which they worked with the IT department to provide both staff and learners with IT equipment. The success of remote teaching was further enhanced by the adaptation of assessments to suit the new learning environments. When online assessment was not possible and there was a restriction on the number of learners permitted in buildings, the ETB facilitated longer opening days. The review team also learned that Community Education programmes were adapted to provide online learning and support to isolated individuals and groups.

The review took place as the profile of FET was increasing in the country. SOLAS had been created in 2013 and a new Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) was established in 2020. SOLAS had published a range of new strategies for the sector and a Strategic Performance Agreement (SPA) between GRETB and SOLAS had been signed.

The ETB's approach to quality assurance and enhancement

After GRETB's re-engagement with QQI in 2018 it submitted an Executive Evaluation Report reviewing its quality processes. Since then, annual Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) have been submitted to QQI. In the SER, the ETB shows how it has advanced processes identified as areas for improvement in its Executive SER. This involved setting up a FET Quality Council, a QA Steering Group, an FET Programme Board and an Apprenticeship Quality Council. It also successfully merged National Learning Network (NLN), Local Training Initiatives (LTIs) and Community Training Centre (CTC) programmes from the Transition Quality Assurance System (TQAS) with GRETB's QA system. After the amalgamation of the VECs and the transfer of the Training Centre to the ETB, four different QA systems were in operation. There are now two systems, and personnel who were involved in merging those systems will also help merge the final two processes.

The Quality Council was established in April 2020 and focuses on assessing the needs and purposes of programmes. The Quality Council also considers if they are being correctly implemented. The Quality Council looks at the measurable impact and quality of courses and incorporates learner evaluations. The review team was told by the Quality Council that the process itself has had an

enormous impact on staff and QA is seen not just as part of FET but as an important process in itself. During the review week, members of the Quality Council said that the process began with the aim of creating a quality culture in the organisation rather than just a quality department. Staff commented on how the establishment of the Council has put a coherent structure on the governance of QA and has helped to create a central oversight to optimise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) across the organisation.

The review team noted that the ETB considered quality assurance to be an across-the-board process and not just confined to those directly involved in teaching and assessment. This was evidenced by the fact that administrative staff members were brought directly into the process. The QA Oversight Group (Self Evaluation Steering Group) was chaired by the Head of Corporate Services and the Compliance Officer also sat on the committee. Those involved commented that getting buy-in from the administrative side was difficult at first but staff participating in the SER said it was a really valuable experience and that they now saw themselves as being part of QA.

The SER acknowledged that there was no central repository for all QA documents and that this was being addressed by the QA and IT departments (SER, p28). During the review week, the review team learned that the QA department was working alongside their OSD colleagues and had already begun assessing existing policies with the intention of putting a strong policy framework in place.

During the review week, the review team heard that GRETB viewed quality assurance as starting at the first point of contact with the organisation. The establishment of the Provision and Pathways Unit aimed to get that process underway through establishing a central contact point and by overseeing information given through the recruitment and guidance services. Management and staff of the ETB acknowledged that external communications need to be improved but their aim is that when a learner interacts with the organisation, they have a positive and rewarding experience. Learners are inducted and the inclusion unit is preparing a Learners' Charter. The view expressed to the review team by staff was that good relationships between those directly involved in education, IT, Finance, HR, and the Building Unit all lead to quality.

The importance of quality assurance of the learner environment and of the learner experience was stressed by many participants during the review week. Recruitment practices were thorough and in line with best practice and legislative requirements, and Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) was being strengthened following the appointment of a Professional Development coordinator in 2020 (SER, 24-25). However, the review team was told that there were challenges in sourcing and retaining high quality staff, particularly in Gaeltacht and rural areas.

The QA Department stressed during the review week that, in order to ensure quality assurance in the area of assessment, it was important that External Authenticators (EAs) were well-trained, were subject specialists and were matched as well as possible to centres. They also stressed the importance of having all documentation prepared for the Results Approval Panel (RAP). EA recruitment is now centralised so there is consistency across results. The review team was told that feedback from the RAP is exceptionally good in GRETB and that it identifies good practice and enables centres to address areas that need improvement. The QA Department is overseeing the assessment process to ensure that there is consistency of practice across the organisation.

The commitment to quality assurance is evident in the recent increase in numbers in the QA department. When preparing the SER, this department had a very small staff, but the review team learned that it had been increased to 6.5 as the ETB had transferred staff from the Training Centre to the central QA team. The review team considers that this will further aid the creation of a singular QA system in the ETB. The QA team told the reviewers that the enhanced unit now intended to become proactive rather than reactive and it was hoped that “the newly established processes would become habits”.

During the review sessions with GRETB's staff and its senior management, the review team observed a genuine endeavour to provide high-quality education programmes. This reflects the stated vision of GRETB: “To actively lead the provision of high-quality education and training programmes and services that respond to the changing needs of learners and society”. With this vision, GRETB seems to strive for flexibility in providing education by basing it on the demands of the learners in the region. To achieve this, GRETB fully supports learners through embracing its mission statement, which reflects this endeavour: “To support individuals, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to social, cultural and economic development”. In order to operationalise this mission, GRETB is driven by four strategic goals to mention:

- Improve the learning experience and success of learners.
- Improve the progress of learners at risk of disadvantage, those with special needs or with language, cultural and social differences.
- Provide high-quality education and training programmes.
- Ensure organisational infrastructure (people, progress, and structure) is efficient and effective.

As a result, GRETB invests in core values as defined in their provider profile: leadership, inclusivity, collaboration, innovation, and accountability. Based on the review sessions with learners, external stakeholders, and the staff of GRETB, the review team became aware that these five core values have been embraced by those working, learning, and cooperating with GRETB.



Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

2.1 Key features of the self-evaluation report development process and the self-evaluation steering group

Galway Roscommon ETB began the preparation of its self-evaluation report (SER) towards the end of the period covered by its Strategy Statement 2017-2021. GRETB Senior Management Team welcomed the inaugural review as they sought to utilise the self-evaluation process and accompanying report as an opportunity to assess and benchmark quality assurance in their ETB. When the Self-evaluation Oversight Group was established in January 2021, its aim was to oversee and guide the self-evaluation process, reflect on GRETB's approach to quality assurance, and set out clear terms of reference and responsibilities.

The Chief Executive delegated responsibilities pertaining to the self-evaluation review but held overall responsibility. Membership of the GRETB Self-Evaluation Oversight Group comprised the Head of Corporate Services as Chair, a newly appointed QA Administrator as Secretary, and a cross-section of GRETB divisions to include a Training Centre Manager, Adult Education Officers, a Compliance Officer, a QA Coordinator and a Director of Further Education and Training. Other staff involved included those involved in governance, support services and administration, learning practitioners, and quality assurance practitioners. During the review week, members of the group communicated to the review team that it was a collaborative process and that it had worked well.

The Self Evaluation Oversight Group held 18 meetings between 26 January and 11 November 2021. The QA Coordinator and Administrator carried out a desk-based review in 2020. A series of stakeholder engagements was planned but these were impacted by the restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A variety of mechanisms were employed in engaging with GRETB's key stakeholders such as questionnaires and focus groups.

The self-evaluation process centred on internal and external stakeholder engagement. In identifying participants at Steering Group level, GRETB decided that the AEOs and line managers were in the best position to go back to their centres/sections to identify who was best suited to take part.

Participant feedback was sought from the following:

- GRETB staff members were invited to participate in the self-evaluation process by completing an Individual Staff Questionnaire. 301 Responses were received from a target group of 800.
- Learners were invited to complete a questionnaire in Quarter 2 of 2021 with 473 responses collated. The questionnaire asked learners to respond to a series of statements based on their experiences in FET. AONTAS also collaborated to provide input into learner engagement.
- Internal Focus Groups of which there were 13.
- Example learner evaluations were also sought from GRETB FET centres.
- Galway Technical Institute (GTI) carried out an internal questionnaire with learners, receiving 480 responses on their experiences in FET.
- The Community Education Service engaged 70 community groups on their experience of online learning, particularly during Covid-19 restrictions.

External engagements were as follows:

- The Employer Engagement Questionnaire questioned 140 businesses in the region in September 2021 to ascertain their potential skills shortages and how best GRETB could respond. There was feedback from a range of employers including multinationals, SMEs and national groups.
- Focus Groups with external stakeholders took place involving second providers, community training, Non-Government Organisations and Family Resource Centres.

The self-evaluation was carried out during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this had both positive and negative effects on the process. Staff quickly became more proficient in the use of IT. The review team was told that online meetings could be held more often and that it was easy to share documents. However, staff involved in the self-evaluation process commented that it was very challenging to engage learners in the focus groups online and that this would probably have been easier in a face-to-face or more informal setting. The responses of directly targeted staff were lower than expected, but during the review week staff members spoke of the increased workload and the difficulty of setting aside time to complete the questionnaire. Many of them said that they only filled it in after repeated requests from the QA team.

2.2. Commentary on the self-evaluation report and the way the ETB has engaged with the inaugural review process

While the SER was comprehensive, the review team felt it did not reflect the extent to which a broad range of staff were involved in the process of self-review. During the review week the team met a wide range of teaching staff, learners, administration staff, external stakeholders and others who demonstrated openness, transparency and a willingness to evolve throughout the inaugural review process. The participants were communicative, committed, realistic and especially active during the sessions. It became clear that their reflections were in essence based on a fundamental care for the learner and a pride in the quality of the learner experience. The review team was especially impressed by the involvement of both educational and administrative staff in the SER process and the cultural realisation within the organisation that quality assurance is everyone's responsibility.

The importance of communicating what the ETB does, both internally and externally, was evident during the review week and administrative staff commented that even they did not realise the extent of the services that were being provided. Staff also commented that in reviewing the organisation the focus is often on what is wrong while in the staff survey 96% said they were proud of what they do (SER, 39).

The formality of the process highlighted gaps in the structure. However, it has served to equip GRETB with defined Terms of Reference, roles, responsibilities, and priorities around quality assurance. It also illustrated staffing gaps which have either been filled or the recruitment process has commenced. An example of this is the planned hiring of a new staff member for monitoring and curriculum review.

The review team finds the self-evaluation report to be a comprehensive document, yet in some parts it does not reflect the extent of the work being carried out by GRETB. This inaugural review process allowed internal and external stakeholders to detail the scope of work being undertaken to ensure that the learner experience from the first engagement is a positive one with multiple feedback loops and interactions along their education journey. During the review week, a member of the senior management team commented "Feedback needs to be used to improve the quality of the student experience". The review team heard this during sessions with learners that "Teachers listen, yes, feedback is encouraged, it is not personal".

Given the extensive remit of GRETB from a geographical, cultural, and societal perspective, capturing quality assurance at every touchpoint can be problematic.

During the review week the QA team members expressed their intention that quality be at the centre of everything that they do, that in the future the unit will be more proactive, that it will be consistent and that the current momentum will be maintained.

The review team acknowledges the limited number of staff available to the ETB during the internal review process and commends them on the successful outcome they achieved. The team also acknowledges how enthusiastically and openly the ETB engaged in the self-evaluation process and in the review week and how willingly and promptly all requested documentation was provided.

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB on the thoughtful and in-depth process of its quality review as demonstrated in the SER, in the Provider Profile and in the discussions during the review week. The review team appreciates the enormous efforts of GRETB in conducting a strong evidence-based self-evaluation in cooperation with staff members, external stakeholders, and learners.

A close-up, side-profile photograph of a person with short, light-colored hair, wearing a light blue surgical mask and clear safety glasses. They are wearing a light blue long-sleeved lab coat and are focused on operating a white Singer sewing machine. The machine is on a dark surface, and the person's hands are visible near the needle area. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with some electrical outlets and cables.

Section

3

Quality Assurance &
Enhancement

Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

ETB Mission & Strategy

GRETB's Mission and Vision centres on the experience of the learner. During the review week, the review team saw strong evidence that the mission, "To support individuals through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to social, cultural and economic development" was being implemented. Learners, staff and external stakeholders spoke of the encouragement and help given to individuals who wished to progress in FET. These learners included school leavers engaged in fulltime Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses and apprenticeships and mature individuals returning to learning. Through its commitment to quality assurance and to the provision of relevant and up-to-date programmes, the ETB is also adhering to its vision statement, "To actively lead the provision of high-quality education and training programmes and services that respond to the changing needs of society".

GRETB has adapted well to the process of strategic planning and the Vision, Mission and Core Values are all set out in its Strategy Statement (2017-2021). This document outlined its priorities, as required under the national Further Education and Training Strategy (2014-2019) and set out four strategic goals to improve the learner experience. At the time of the review, consultations had also taken place to draw up the new Strategy Statement (2022-2026) which will be published in early 2022. GRETB had signed a performance agreement with SOLAS for the 2018-2020 period and was preparing to sign a new agreement with SOLAS in 2022 (SER, 19-24).

The ETB, both in the SER and during the review week, demonstrated that quality assurance was central to the achievement of its strategic goals and core objectives. Staff members were committed to the advancement of these goals and objectives and new initiatives were described which illustrated the proactive nature of the ETB. New programmes had been introduced which included six new apprenticeships and five traineeships. A new Arborist Apprenticeship programme has also been developed. The ETB further strengthened its provision of Level 5 and Level 6 programmes in its FET Colleges and in its Training Centre and maintained its extensive adult and community education provision throughout its catchment area. Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) has been developed and, during the Covid 19 period, staff adapted quickly to new methodologies of teaching online.

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

The quality assurance governance structure is in development in GRETB and has been advanced during the preparation and completion of the self-evaluation report (SER). The quality assurance team demonstrated pride in how far they have progressed but acknowledged the work remaining in this area. Staff shortages necessitated the ETB to be innovative and to request existing staff members to take a more involved role in quality assurance. This helped to expand both the culture and commitment to quality beyond a single department thus avoiding a siloed approach.

The governance structure and the management of quality assurance was developed with staff in addition to their existing roles. Following the SER, GRETB has advanced many of its own recommendations relating to quality assurance such as centralising systems, the introduction of department leads and reallocation of staff to the QA Department.

Both in the review week and in the SER (p, 27), GRETB senior management team said that historically there was a lack of clearly defined QA governance structures in the organisation. The QA Department has implemented a FET governance structure with associated Terms of Reference (ToR) for the governance functions. The structures have been changed to implement a cycle of quality assurance and a significant step forward has been made for quality sustainability. Each of the main governance groups considered and amended the ToR from the Shared Quality Assurance Enhancement Project. Amendments were made to account for the context of existing FET operations. The Terms of Reference for the Working Groups are determined by the purpose of the group. Membership of the QA governance groups includes representation from across GRETB's FET services, stakeholders, subject matter experts and external authenticators. GRETB senior management team has concerns about the lack of learner representation on the various groups, and it intends to address this issue (SER, 27).

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB on its recognition of the urgency to create more formalised and managed quality assurance systems within the ETB and the follow-on creation and development of a dedicated QA Department.

Recommendation

- The review team noted the lack of learner representation on GRETB's governance groups. It is recommended that the ETB examine ways of including the learner voice throughout the

organisation and that formal means of ensuring learner representation on executive boards and committees be explored with other ETBs and the relevant government departments.

Documentation of Quality Assurance

GRETB's approach to quality is guided by QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and Sector-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

During review week, the review team was told by teaching staff, in the apprenticeship area, that "transitional quality assurance systems (TQAS) have been in use, these are historic. This is paper based, slow, and inefficient and needs to move to a more automated system". Documentation repositories tend to be siloed partly due to the fact that it has two agreements with QQI and also uses other accrediting bodies. This issue should be addressed. It is important to acknowledge that the IT department is under-resourced and currently may be unable to dedicate resources to resolving this problem.

The review team was told that a review of existing policies on quality assurance helped the QA team to identify areas that needed improvement. A policy framework across FET is being developed, that framework provides the guidance on what policies are needed. These will be developed and added to the existing repository of policies. Staff feedback is important in this process and is taken into account in documentation relating to new policies. At the moment, documentation relating to quality assurance is shared on SharePoint, this will change when the GRETB Connect portal is operational.

GRETB plans to create a centralised repository to house all quality assurance documentation. Documentation repositories tend to be siloed partly as a result of the fact that different accrediting bodies are linked to GRETB progression paths. The review team finds that this is an issue that should be addressed. It is important to note that during the review visit the review team was told that the IT department is under-resourced and currently may be unable to dedicate resources to resolving this problem.

Commendation

- The review team commends the agility of the IT team in responding rapidly to the requirements of teaching, learning and QA during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that all QA documentation be digitised in accordance with GDPR best practice. It should be centralised and made available to staff in accordance with a hierarchy of access depending on role.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Section 2.4 of the SER (p 34) states that “GRETB recruits, inducts and retains the most suitable candidates to match its culture and strategic operational requirements in terms of learning and personal development”. During the review week, the team noticed a strong sense of personal responsibility amongst staff, along with effective support from management. However, this did seem to vary depending on the centre location, programme, or department. Comments made during the second day of the main review sessions illustrated the diverse experience of staff regarding Professional Learning and Development (PL&D). Apprenticeship tutors commented that “GRETB did not provide personal development – but it is sourced elsewhere”; “it is hard to get training specific to the trade”; “some PL&D course content is old and needs updating, and curricula are not aligned with developments in the field; “as a part-time employee [one] does not meet the requirements for PL&D provided by GRETB”. In addition, some trainers expressed concerns in relation to being granted the leave necessary to attend in-service training. The review team considers that this might also explain why 7% (in a 10-year period) and 10% (in a three-year period) of staff did not attend any PL&D activities (SER, 37-38). Staff involved in the prison service programme commented that “Overall, more training and collaboration across centres would benefit all”. Interviewees were forthright and genuine in expressing what could be improved in an already well-functioning collegiate network. In contrast to these statements, many other staff spoke highly of their experience with professional development provided by GRETB. This was particularly true regarding the TEL programme and the shift to online and blended learning necessitated by Covid-19. These experiences highlight some inconsistencies across centres, programmes, and departments. GRETB is aware of this and is taking steps towards improving internal communications and awareness of employee assistance supports through its newly formed Inclusion Unit and the HR department (SER, 40).

The review team noted that understaffing is an ongoing concern. Difficulties exist in recruiting specific skill sets such as: Irish language-speaking tutors, ESOL (literacy) tutors, IT support staff, and IT tutors. A number of problems were highlighted: rates of pay in some areas are not competitive; there is a limited pool of Irish-speaking tutors or ESOL instructors and there are high rates of staff turnover in the community education area. Lack of pedagogical training and IT skills can also be a challenge for some subject-specific instructors. HR is in the process of an internal staff audit and is recruiting to fill vacancies. In recruiting teaching staff, the ETB must follow agreed allocations and in recruiting administration staff it must seek permission from the relevant government departments. In all cases, the ETB must adhere to nationally agreed rates of pay and conditions. Discussions during the review highlighted the shortage of staff in certain areas such as IT services. The tenure of some administrative posts is of two years duration, and this is very limiting in attracting talent. Business cases had been made to the relevant government departments and SOLAS to increase staff

allocations. The Quality Assurance Unit is making every effort to work around and through these restrictions.

Commendation

- The review team commends the ETB for the PL&D opportunities and ongoing support provided to staff. The plans which are underway to develop an organisation wide PL&D policy are also to be commended.

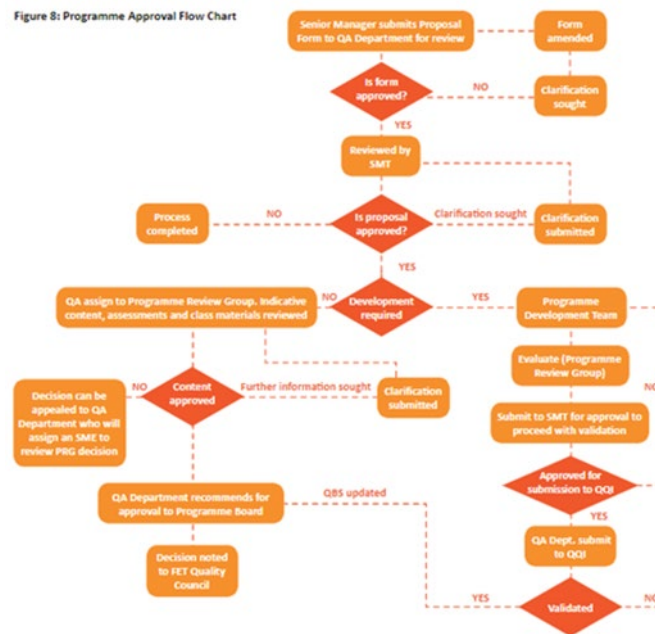
Recommendations

- The review team recommends that, based on COVID-19 experiences, the ETB continue to use the digital environment to support and extend PL&D. This should be extended to include apprenticeship tutors in profession linked PL&D activities.
- The review team recommends that the ETB, in addressing the changing needs in programmes, explore the skill sets of existing teaching, instructing and tutor staff, to identify subject matter expertise that they may have, and which could be utilised. In addressing the difficulties of recruiting teaching staff, particularly in Gaeltacht and rural areas, pathways should be explored to encourage recently qualified learners to upskill and become FET practitioners.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

A comprehensive process for programme development and approval was agreed by the Quality Council in June 2021 and is a newly existing part of GRETB's umbrella policies towards quality assurance across all centres (SER, page 42 and figure 8).

Figure 3: Programme Approval Flow chart of GRETB²



It was demonstrated during the review week discussions, that GRETB has a high level of employer needs-based programme development. As of 2020 all new programmes must go through a strenuous approval process. In order to facilitate the introduction of the new process, GRETB organised training for staff in screening programmes and has signed up to attend the FET training in programme development.

It was commented on during the review week that “never has a programme request been denied”, if it was possible for GRETB to deliver it. This was in specific reference to meeting the needs of the learners, employers, and community stakeholders in each area. The review team is of the opinion that it speaks so highly of the integrity and care which was illustrated repeatedly throughout the review week regarding each centre's delivery of the best possible programme - developed and delivered to meet very specific circumstances. An issue with the time taken to develop programmes has been raised, both in the SER and during the review visit and is something of which GRETB is aware. GRETB staff are also aware of communication with employers on this topic and efforts are being

² Galway and Roscommon ETB Self-evaluation Report (SER), p 42

made to communicate to external stakeholders why it takes time to roll out programmes when they are requesting new programmes to meet current demands in their respective sectors.

The review team considers it important that the individual centres' flexibility and response time is not curtailed by the newly introduced process where senior managers submit each proposal to the QA department to begin the approval process. GRETB QA staff and senior management are aware of this concern and are responding proactively. More staff have been made part of the QA department and as the process is better understood, it is working more efficiently.

Concern was expressed in the SER (p 44) regarding the lack of established structures around curriculum development and, during the review week, members of the GRETB FET team suggested that there was a need for permanent staff in the curriculum development unit. As a result of the self-evaluation reporting process, a firmer relationship has developed amongst the FET centres and with the Organisation Support and Development (OSD) section. Internal audits of staff resources (looking at the skill sets of more than 2,000 existing employees) may help to identify those with existing expertise whose skills may be under utilised.

GRETB is involved in extensive collaborative efforts with employers, stakeholders, and other ETBs in developing relevant and specific programmes with up-to-date curricula. The process has helped develop communication, encouraged the sharing of ideas and best practice, and has set up a strong foundation for future growth. One major concern that GRETB needs to address, and of which it is aware, is the amount of time, money, and personal investment this process demands. The matter was referenced in the SER (p 44) and was spoken about in depth during the review week.

Commendations

- The review team commends the positive, open, flexible, and proactive relationship between individual centres and their communities which is a core value for GRETB.
- The review team commends GRETB staff on their collaborative work with other ETBs in the development of new curricula and programmes.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that the ETB continue to work on new programme development to address the changing needs of industry, society and learners.

Access, Transfer and Progression

Learners communicated to the review team that GRETB is very welcoming to new learners and makes great efforts to ensure that they are on appropriate courses and are aware of the supports on offer. Learners find out about courses through the Further Education and Training Course Hub (FETCH), through promotional campaigns, school visits and word of mouth. Some learners are also referred by external agencies such as the Department of Social Protection (DSP). However, several of those involved in the review sessions said that they heard of programmes from family or friends and otherwise would not have been aware of what the ETB had to offer. It became evident to the review team that, while the ETB is proactive and very welcoming, members of the public are not aware of the broad extent of the programmes and opportunities available.

Learners register for a GRETB course in a variety of ways including in person using paper-based application forms, online for PLC provision, using FETCH, registering directly with Senior Training Advisors for Apprenticeships, employers using the Apprentice Client Services System (ACSS) and now for full-time courses through the CAO application process. Reservations were expressed by some teaching staff regarding the complexity and detail of FET enrolment forms, but this is a SOLAS requirement, and the ETB does not have control over the content.

The Adult Guidance Information Service (AGIS) and the college guidance counsellors are available to prospective and current learners and advise on course selection and on progression opportunities. Work is also ongoing to produce a Learner Handbook for September 2022.

At present, a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) service is not available to incoming learners, but the ETB has established a working group to develop an RPL policy and a draft policy has recently been presented to the FET Senior Management Team for review and approval.

When learners wish to transfer courses within GRETB, this is facilitated by the individual centres or through the AGIS (SER, 46).

It was evident, both from the SER (p, 46-47) and from the review sessions with staff and learners, that progression is strongly encouraged. Progression pathways include both moving to a higher-level programme within the ETB and progression to courses in higher education (HE) institutes. The review

team heard from several learners that they had started on a part-time level 3 programme and progressed to levels 5 or 6 or had progressed from levels 5 or 6 to a degree level programme.

There was evidence of very effective contacts and interaction between the ETB and the two local higher education colleges (NUIG and GMIT/ATU). Representatives of higher education spoke of the close relationship with the ETB, and some were active on ETB committees. Meetings are held regularly, and pathways have been established to facilitate learners progressing to degree level courses. Learners generally use the Higher Education Links Scheme through the Central Applications Office (CAO), but agreements have been reached and MOUs signed regarding a range of advanced entry programmes. Some of these MOUs also involved adapting some of the PLC programmes to allow for advanced entry (SER, 46). Progression to higher-level courses locally, nationally and internationally is facilitated by the Guidance staff in the PLC colleges and by the Adult Information and Guidance Service (AIGS).

FET includes “Courses for Employment” and “Courses for HE Progression” (National FET Strategy: Transforming Learning (2020), 50-54). As many of the courses offered by GRETB are skill-based, progression to employment is strongly encouraged. The ETB provides workshops on interview techniques and CV preparation and centres publicise job vacancies in their locality using word of mouth, notice boards and social media. During the review week there was strong evidence of positive relationships with employers both in terms of running programmes to meet their needs and also their employment of GRETB graduates.

During the review week the GRETB FET team expressed difficulties regarding tracking learners after they had completed their courses. However, Appendix 7 of the SER shows that the ETB had evidence of progression and outcomes for two thirds of the 2019 FET learners. Of these 4,633 were on the same or higher FET courses; 359 had progressed to higher education and 1,107 were in employment. The ETB does not have a means of tracking learners a year after they complete their courses other than by directly contacting them. A member of the senior management team commented that there is a need for tracking, saying “we need a centralised approach to tracking and supporting centres to do their own”.

The review team feels this is something which needs to be addressed on a national basis, particularly in relation to GDPR.

At all points in the entry system, learners are advised of the wide range of supports available to them, including the provision of reasonable accommodations for examinations, and where applicable, the provision of technology to enhance their participation in their choice of courses. There is a culture of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) embedded in GRETB, as mentioned in another area of this report. Support is given in areas not directly related to the course, if this is beneficial. One learner provided an excellent example when she described mentioning having a desire to improve her employment prospects by getting a driving licence. She was assisted with the theory test in her centre and has now been supported in availing of driving lessons.

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB on the excellent clear pathways they have provided to learners to assist them in progressing in their learning journey, and on the guidance given to ensure the optimum outcomes for learners.

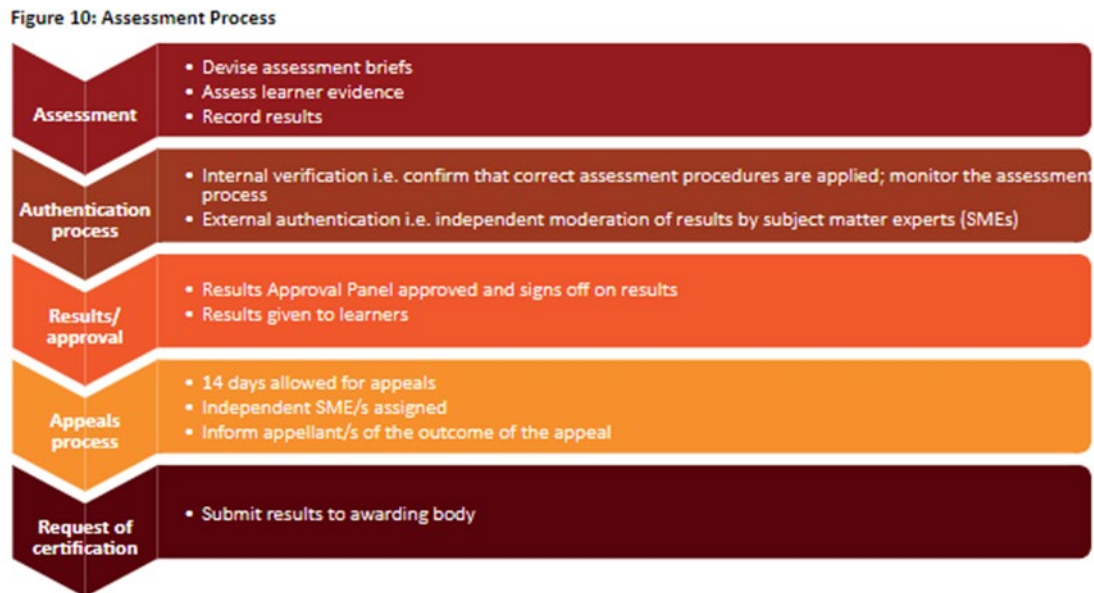
Recommendations

- GRETB has stated its commitment “to ensure that a Recognition of Prior Learning Service is available to learners” and to the development of a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (SER, 46). The review team recommends that the ETB continue with the development of this service to allow for its early introduction across centres.
- The review team recommends that the ETB work in conjunction with SOLAS and other bodies to develop a system of tracking graduates, to explore use of IT in graduate tracking and in line with European examples.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

The review team concluded in its summary at the end of the review visit that integrity and approval of learner results in GRETB can best be described as very well organised.

Figure 4: Assessment Process of GRETB³



Since 2018 the assignment of EAs has been centralised in the QA department. This has allowed for wider insights and feedback from across all centres. Centre managers and practitioners agree this process is constructive and worthwhile (SER, p 50). Further evidence was elicited during the review week when external stakeholders commented that “regular meetings to plan courses, review and evaluate outcomes occurred. Both parties respond to mutual comments and feedback and build on this. GRETB representatives will visit on-site to meet with learners and get direct feedback”. It was also commented that “evaluations show that course output is as designed” and that communication was particularly effective.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, measures were implemented to improve and streamline the IV and EA processes. This is outlined in the SER (p 51), GRETB intend to continue with these system modifications.

³ Galway and Roscommon ETB Self-evaluation Report (SER), p50

It has also been noted that the communications and interactions of the results approval panel (RAP) is effective and consistent across all centres. Staff said that “RAP meets each centre individually to discuss IV and EA Reports, and assessment results. Good practices and issues to be addressed are recorded for each centre in their individual RAP Report” (SER p 51). Discussions during the review week with the QA Department confirmed these processes and allowed GRETB to explain in greater detail many of the recommendations which are currently being implemented. One member of the teaching staff commented on the importance of preparation of learner portfolio material on the Childcare programme, for examination by the RAP panel, if required.

Based on the reflections of the QA Department it was apparent that the impressively organised approval process is being further developed. Staff are more clearly and frequently briefed with training and updates. EA recruitment and consistency across centres continues to be a priority. Relationships with other departments such as finance, HR, and buildings (Corporate Services and OSD) have improved dramatically. During the review week, the review team heard during sessions with staff that “EAs are well-trained, are subject specialists and are matched as well as possible to centres”.

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB on the development of a quality culture across the organisation, as was strongly evidenced during the review week. The “onerous task” of preparing and participating in the evaluation process has effected positive change and brought even more rigor to the integrity of learner results.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that the ETB review the changes to the IV and EA processes that have been implemented as a result of Covid-19 with a view to making them standard thus reducing the paper-heavy trail and making the IV process more streamlined and time efficient. The ETB should also continue to recruit EAs to ensure subject matter experts are available across all centres and programmes.

Information and Data Management

GRETB uses different systems to manage information and data. According to the SER, most of the systems support the monitoring of data and information concerning learner attendance, progression and results. The following systems are used:

- Programme Learning Support System (PLSS): A system which is hosted by SOLAS in order to store data concerning learners, programmes, and service, in order to process and store course information, in addition to learner reports, records and outcomes.
- QQI Business System (QBS): A system providing FET QQI certification data and used at centre level to request certification.
- The Walled Garden: A system concerning assessment and certification of awards offered by City and Guilds in order to generate reports for supporting continuous development and improvement, in addition to QA monitoring and review, and data validation at centre level.
- Results Capture and Certification Request System (RCCRS): A system at training centre level to manage certification requests.

One of the most important elements of information and data management is the use of data in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). GRETB stressed the necessity to comply with GDPR both during the review week and in the SER (pp 54-55). Firstly, based on the SER, GRETB developed a range of GDPR related policies and procedures, which are accessible, among others, on its website. In addition (as mentioned in the SER), these policies have been regularly reviewed and updated.

Secondly, GRETB is aware of the fact that it is vital that staff members are aware of GDPR and its associated procedures. To this end, GRETB provides professional development training concerning GDPR, which according to the SER was attended by 60% of those who completed the staff survey (SER, p 38). As mentioned in the SER, this training is part of the induction programme for new staff. Additionally, 20% of the staff who completed the staff survey, followed a specialised course on PLSS.

Finally, the specialised Data Protection Unit that has been installed and the appointed Data Protection Officer support staff members, external stakeholders, and learners, with day-to-day queries concerning GDPR. In addition to advice and guidance, this unit assists with, among other things, Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), Data Breaches and Data Access Requests. According to the review sessions with learners, most confirmed that data is findable and accessible, in relation to their progression and results in addition to course and programme information. However, among staff members, not all data seems to be findable and usable. As mentioned earlier, a central repository for documents is needed. This seems to be recognised at GRETB management level and within the QA

department. During the review week, staff at all levels commented on the problem of understaffing of the IT department. This is also highlighted in the SER (p 55).

During Covid-19 restrictions, the move to the online learning supported remote learning for FET learners. Teaching staff also transformed their way of working and embraced the use of technology in teaching. This brought new demands in terms of access, data-sharing, privacy and compliance. Some online learning will remain in a post-pandemic world and resources to maintain these systems will be required.

Commendation

- The review team highly commends the steps taken by GRETB to realise data management in compliance with GDPR. The review team further commends the ETB for ensuring accessibility of information for learners which is vitally important in stimulating and involving learners in their learning process.

Recommendation

- The basic foundation of information and data management in GRETB is adequately organised and in compliance with GDPR. The review team recommends that GRETB continue to address the issue of staff shortages in the IT department. All data management systems should be checked to ensure they meet GDPR guidelines, including Multi-Factor Authentication, where required.

Public Information and Communication

Enhancing public information and communication is a priority area of work within GRETB. The review visit confirmed there is organisation-wide awareness and an acknowledgement that both internal and external communications are under-resourced, under-staffed and impacting learner recruitment, brand and reputation management of the organisation, stakeholder engagement and internal staff communications.

Conversations with some stakeholders described GRETB as being “a very well-kept secret”. One business owner commented that he had no knowledge of how GRETB could be relevant or indeed support his business, but once he had a conversation with an employer engagement officer, it was a catalyst for what is now a “game-changing” relationship. The business has, to-date, upskilled up to 40 staff and has been able to fill senior management roles from within his team due to the GRETB

training programmes. It was clearly documented in the SER that “GRETB as an organisation needs more promotion across all communities” (SER, p 57). It was acknowledged repeatedly through the review week that a proactive initiative to implementing these changes is underway.

GRETB senior leadership acknowledge the information and communications deficiency and are hiring internally for a communications manager. The organisation is restricted from externally hiring due to funding caps at department level but feel there may be existing talent that can be utilised.

Furthermore, a new method of streamlining communications has been developed within GRETB in relation to inbound enquiries. In practice, when a member of the public contacts the ETB through a central phone number they will receive all necessary and relevant information tailored to their enquiry. GRETB says that commitment to QA starts at that first point of contact.

The review teams finds that this consistency is enhanced through the establishment of the Provision and Pathways Unit. This unit oversees information given through the recruitment and guidance service. It is there to support QA and ensure that there is quality provision across the ETB.

During the review week, staff informed the review team that the establishment of the FET Enterprise Unit will make employer engagement more effective and streamlined and that “it needs to be a dedicated resource”.

The review team finds that there are no clear, single brand identity guidelines for GRETB so there is a lack of consistency in documents, and in marketing and communications materials. During the review week, the review team heard that the national FET strategy is contingent on staffing and legacy issues being addressed. The ETB is negotiating nationally for this to happen.

According to the SER (p 57) “The Head of Corporate Services represents GRETB on the ETBI Communications Network which aims to address sectoral communications needs. The objective is to develop a shared sectoral identity and voice for the benefit of member ETBs and to improve sectoral communications, and to develop and implement a campaign to promote the ETB brand locally and internationally. ETBI is currently finalising a sectoral Communication Strategy which GRETB will use as a base for its communication strategy into the future”.

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB for the establishment of the FET Enterprise Unit and the Provision and Pathways Unit as these create a cohesiveness that was previously lacking in targeted communication.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that GRETB further examine the issue of communications to ensure that members of the public and prospective learners are aware of the extent of the services it offers. It is recommended that new GRETB continue with the work already underway to develop a shared sectoral identity and communication strategy as outlined in the SER (p 57).

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Learning Environment

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the entire review was conducted remotely, and the review team was unable to see and experience the teaching and learning facilities in GRETB. However, GRETB provided the review team with an instructive video to give a flavour of the scope and geographical variation of the area it serves. This presentation offered an insight to the effort, commitment, and proactive approach which the quality assurance team has embraced as a result of engaging in this review. Learners during the review week also indicated that regardless of centre location or age of facility they were working from, the environment was warm, comfortable, and sufficient to their needs.

According to the SER, GRETB has over 40 Further Education Centres across Galway and Roscommon, covering an area of 8699 km. This includes one PLC College, three Dual Provision Schools offering PLC courses, one Training Centre, seven Youthreach Centres, seven VTOS Centres and several Community Education programmes. With over 2000 staff, it caters for over 15,800 learners in both full and part time programmes, from Levels 1 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. In addition, GRETB offers unaccredited programmes as part of the Core Personal and General Learning provision. GRETB provides for the single largest, most populous Gaeltacht area in Ireland and has several FET centres which provide learning through the medium of Irish.

Utilising funding from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, paid via SOLAS for Buildings and Capital Equipment, GRETB has focused on the upgrade and replacement of life safety systems, expansion of apprenticeship workshops, and refurbishment of existing learning spaces. As part of their strategic plan, GRETB proposes to develop a flagship Further Education and Training Campus in Galway City - FET College of the Future; the purchase of a newly refurbished 30,000 sq. ft building beside the GRETB Training Centre to allow for an anticipated increase in demand for apprenticeship places; the development of FET centres in Galway and Roscommon; refurbishment of existing facilities to meet changing demand; and energy upgrades in line with Climate Action obligations (SER, p 60).

The exceptional agility and adaptability of the TEL team is evidenced in the speed of their response to the Covid-19 restrictions (SER, p 14). The team developed a sweeping array of resources for staff and learners, including but not confined to Teams, Zoom, Powtoon, Screencast and apps such as Padlet. Training was given to staff by the TEL team, and staff praised the excellence of the provision of training in the use of new software to assist with remote teaching. During the review team's

sessions with learners, they confirmed that they had felt well supported in the use of technology and that any issues were dealt with quickly. Evidence of this was provided through comments to the effect that, not only were devices and access provided by GRETB, but the tuition on how to log on to and engage with an online forum was readily available. One learner commented, “the hybrid model for online learning ... turned out to be better for everyone, less travel, less cost of travel, and more time for assignments”. Learners also mentioned the fact that internet coverage continued to be available throughout the “shutdown” in the car parks of the various centres. Many learners were provided with laptops and tablets to ensure they could avail of on-line classes. This is very much in evidence of GRETB's Mission and Vision, “to actively lead the provision of high-quality education and training programmes and to support individuals through learning, to achieve their full potential” (SER, p 19). The review team finds that a small shortcoming is that some learners mentioned a shortage of power points in classrooms for recharging devices during classes.

Furthermore, work related assignments replaced work experience in some programmes due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Comments from learners, instructors in apprentice programs, employers, and contracted providers also illustrated the need for continued hands-on training and experience. However, learners expressed their appreciation of the efforts made by staff to accommodate them and their needs. Some learners requested that on-line classes continue to be available as they found these extremely helpful. The move to online learning was welcomed, especially by those in remote areas. Learners from the islands requested more courses in basic computer usage, as this is an area where they feel their skills need to be upgraded.

Due to the distance between centres, the time commitment and the expense of travel is an issue, especially where learners wish to progress to courses in distant centres. Learners mentioned this in review sessions, referring especially to poor public transport (outside GRETB influence). On-line courses during the pandemic helped enormously so it is recommended that GRETB continue to implement a blended learning approach.

Concerning the developments illustrated in new approaches to blended learning, the review team recognises positive impacts and challenges as described in the SER (SER, p 64): “Consideration should be given to the provision of ‘blended delivery’ as opposed to a pedagogical approach to blended learning until such time as the sector has the requisite infrastructure in place to support same”. Minimal staffing and support in the IT department, the biggest challenge to existing infrastructure, is being addressed as this review report is written.

Commendation

- The review team commends the ETB for its ongoing work to improve the existing infrastructure - specific to IT supports and communications - which will allow for sustainable and ongoing improvement to the learning environment.

Recommendation

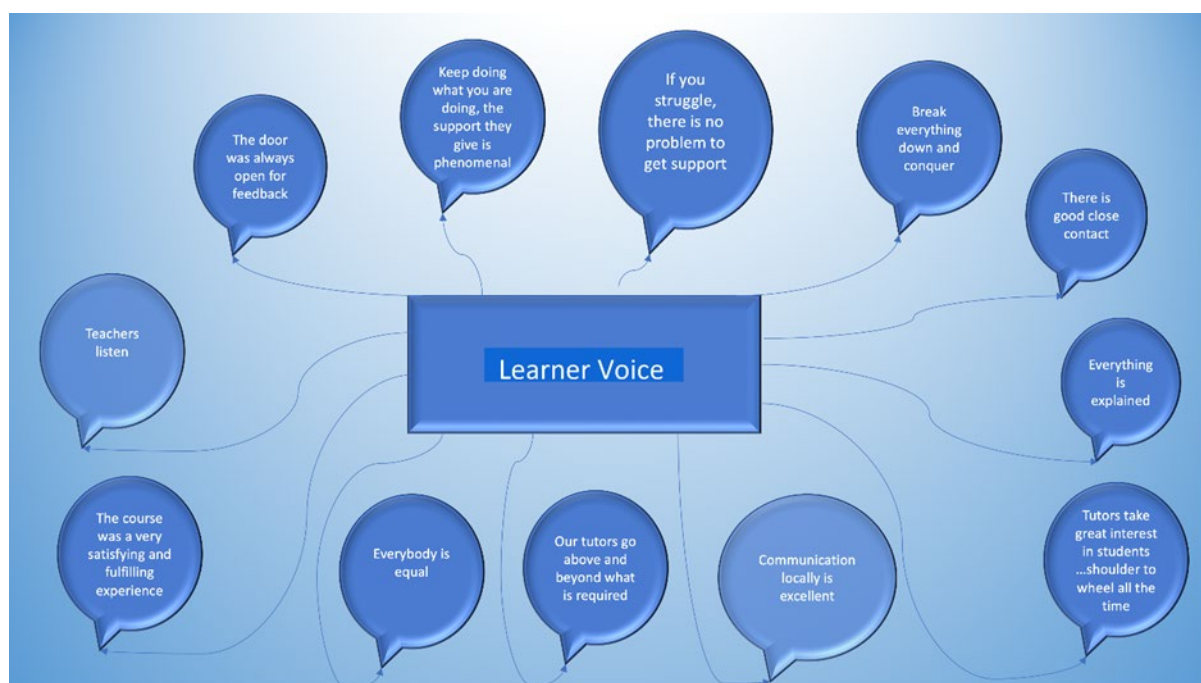
- The review team recommends that GRETB continue to develop and implement a consistent approach to blended learning and delivery which would be available to learners across all centre locations. It is recommended that the momentum and the effective internal practice that was begun as a response to Covid-19 be continued and that GRETB liaise with other ETBs to address regulatory and other issues which might arise.

Assessment of Learners

The review team observed and agreed with the fact that there are "...clear, documented policies and procedures in place to ensure a sound underpinning of all assessment activity..." (SER, p 67). The policies in place, however, are specific to each individual centre/programme based on QA legacy agreements set in place pre-amalgamation (before 2013) (SER, p 65). The COVID-19 restrictions resulted in regular and timely communication with Centre/ Programme managers and FET practitioners, which enabled the implementation of all contingency arrangements for assessment in line with QA-approved arrangements. Concerns regarding the dissemination of EA reports to staff were mentioned in the SER and this is being addressed by QA management (pp 68-69). These improvements to internal communications and access to policy and recommendations across all centre locations highlight the effectiveness and proactive approach GRETB is taking regarding quality assurance.

The evidence provided by learners during the review visit illustrates a consistent attitude of ongoing support and clarity. They are made aware of expectations and achievements needed to be reached to meet learning outcomes. The ETB was very specific in ensuring that learners felt they had access to their records of progress throughout the duration of their programme, a clear understanding of what they are enrolling in, and what the methods of final assessment and certification (if appropriate) would be. In all cases, learners and practitioners agreed that communications and follow through interactions were clear, precise, timely, flexible and that the learner had an overall positive experience.

Figure 5: Quotes from GRETB's Learners



The engagements with learners (past and present) on day one of the review visit and the evidence provided by staff, practitioners, and external stakeholders throughout the course of the week continued to support the fact that GRETB works under robust assessment protocols that they are looking to continue and to improve upon.

Supports for Learners

The review team agreed wholeheartedly that learner support is “a golden standard” in GRETB as was clearly stated throughout the SER, in all accompanying documentation and clearly expressed throughout the course of the interviews. The review team heard evidence of this golden standard from learner and staff experiences, the interactions with GRETB and external stakeholders, the constant reference to learner needs and supports by the QA Department and senior management teams.

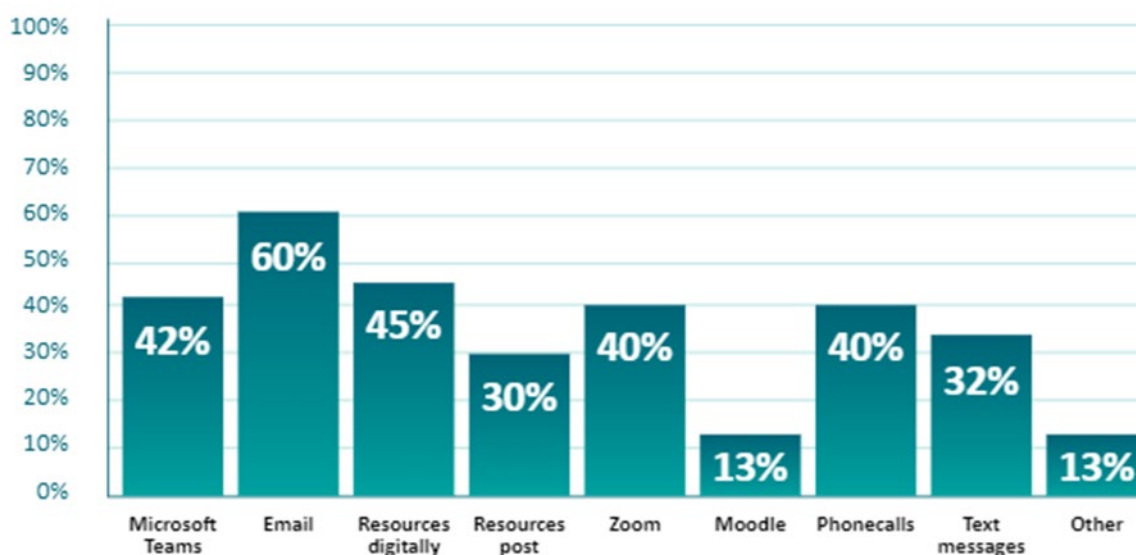
In line with GRETB's core value of inclusivity, the ETB provides a range of supports to learners who require them. These include: Reasonable Accommodation for Assessment; Assistive Technology support: reader pens, hearing loops; Assistive Technology awareness and training week; Adult Education Guidance and Information service: find the right course; Disability Supports; ABE service: Reading, Writing, Numeracy, IT and English Language supports; Counselling in person and online; Laptop and Device Loan Scheme for Disadvantaged Learners; Youth Advocates: Support for early school leavers/those at risk of early leaving, mentoring, alternative options; one-to-one confidential

setting; and sign language interpretation (SER, p 70). It was observed and noted throughout the review week that the “mission of the Learner Support working group is ‘to strive for an inclusive, learner-centred support service which is agile, accessible and compassionate’”. The review team finds that it is genuinely a focus-point and an example of the culture of quality existent in every department.

It was evident in talking with staff members that the principles of Universal Design for Learning are well established in GRETB, with a number of staff members having already completed a course with AHEAD, and holding the badge awarded on completion. This is evident in staff commitment to providing information in many different formats and in the variety of ways staff communicate with learners (SER, p 63 and figure 6). The review team heard that this was especially helpful during the difficult year of restrictions.

Figure 6: Engagement with Learners in GRETB⁴

Figure 12: Engagement with Learners



Learners expressed satisfaction with the level of support they received, telling the review team that their tutors had “gone out of their way” to assist, one learner said, “the support they give is phenomenal”. Many learners commented on the fact that they had been contacted by tutors, to help and check that they were coping with remote learning. A few learners mentioned the need for childcare to facilitate inclusion and participation. While learners are informed of all supports available at induction, the review team finds it is important that these supports continue to be communicated to

⁴ Galway and Roscommon ETB Self-evaluation Report (SER), p 63

learners throughout their course. One learner commented “Learners with disabilities need to be reminded that they can still ask for supports at any point in their course”.

GRETB promotes inclusive engagement, by integrating literacy and numeracy in many of its programmes. ESOL courses are available for those whose first language is not English, however, a few employers (external stakeholders) suggested that more help for learners is needed in this area, which will ultimately improve their employment prospects.

There is considerable evidence of collaboration across services, where managers of services meet and agree to provide for each other's clients. In one discussion with the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (EROC) service and the Community Education Facilitators (CEFs), it emerged that the CEF providers were arranging courses for the EROC clients, which would increase their involvement in the community, and help improve their communication skills. This level of cooperation and inclusion is evident in many services across GRETB and is to be commended.

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB for its awareness of and response to emotional and mental health and well-being of learners which was evidenced in the SER and during the review week. The supports and services made available through the response to Covid-19 were very well received by learners, staff and ultimately stakeholders and it is hoped they continue to be part of GRETB's culture of quality.

Recommendations

- The review team observed very good practice at the majority of centre locations and recommends that GRETB streamline methods to take this best practice and implement it at smaller and rural locations.
- The review team noted the lack of learner representation on GRETB's governance groups. It is recommended that the ETB examine ways of including the learner voice throughout the organisation and that formal means of ensuring learner representation on executive boards and committees be explored with other ETBs and the relevant government departments.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The review team welcomes GRETB's commitment in setting up a comprehensive QA system, as evidenced in the SER, page 22. and all the effort that was put into the preparation and implementation of the self-evaluation, especially given that this is the inaugural review of GRETB QA processes, and the first time GRETB has implemented a self-evaluation on this level.

GRETB has put considerable effort into the implementation of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring, and reviewing the quality of its provisions in order to optimise the learning process for its learners. The review team recognises that the QA department, in collaboration with other staff members at GRETB, has realised a holistic SER. Importantly, the self-evaluation should include a critical self-analysis. This seems to be the case for this SER. In each chapter of the SER the QA department conducted an in-depth self-analysis and has described gaps and success factors of QA processes and procedures. Gaps identified from the SER were examined in discussions during the review visit meetings. Furthermore, evidence was gathered in the review visit that demonstrated that monitoring and review processes are ongoing. The review team appreciates the effort taken to realise this SER in cooperation with staff members and, to a certain extent, learners and external stakeholders.

Based on the SER, it becomes clear that the QA department facilitates the processes required to execute a strong QA policy at GRETB. First, they submit an annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to QQI, describing priorities for policy and procedure development, along with key development activities. In addition to the QIP, GRETB analyses different quantitative data (based on data resources like PLSS and benchmarking reports), and also includes different stakeholders in the QA process. This is achieved using External Authentication (EA) with the involvement of external stakeholders and learners. In addition, Internal Verification (IV) at centre level ensures that assessment processes and procedures are in place and have been followed. The IV and EA reports are discussed during the Results Approval Process meetings that review and monitor assessment results.

The review team recognises that the SER is an important step in optimising QA at GRETB, but more importantly, it became clear that the QA department at GRETB, following initial findings of the SER, have invested efforts into addressing observed gaps and further deepening the culture of quality, after the completion of the SER. This review process has revealed that staff members, external stakeholders, but also learners, are highly involved in QA at GRETB. During the review sessions,

most of the attendees described and showed a strong connection to and involvement in QA. During the review visit discussions, it was demonstrated how participation in self-evaluation and preparation of the SER has expanded the perception of quality among departments and staff that were not traditionally involved in QA, and the sense of urgency for QA seems to be confirmed. The QA department attained significant awareness and implementation of QA within a few months, which has been highly appreciated. The review team recognises this was achieved despite, as stated in the SER, the shortage of staff in the QA Department. The review visit has shown this issue is already being addressed with new staff added to the QA Department.

Although GRETB has achieved a strong critical and realistic self-analysis, the metrics seem to be varied. During the review sessions, but also in the SER itself, it became clear that a system using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was inconsistent across GRETB. A possible next step in the successful self-evaluation, review and monitoring of QA at GRETB would be devising KPIs and using a clear system of metrics to measure the progression, follow up shortcomings and confirm achieved results.

Commendation

- The review team noted, in the SER and during the review sessions, that the monitoring and review phase of the quality cycle is being well implemented in GRETB. The review team commends the steps already taken to build upon the findings of its self-evaluation and make needed adjustments in order to address observed challenges (i.e., staffing, communication, etc.). This enhances the awareness and implementation of QA and ensures that self-evaluation, as an essential element of QA, is being nurtured and encouraged.

Recommendation

- The review team emphasises the necessity of using KPIs to review, monitor and evaluate the quality of the educational process. Consequently, the review team recommends the development and maintenance of a system of metrics based on KPIs to measure and analyse the progression of the training and education provided. In this way, achievements can be recognised, and any shortcomings addressed.

Programme Monitoring & Review

As stated in the SER (p 76), the legacy QA systems for the three former VECs and the TQAS for the Training Centre refer to programme monitoring and review. The practice of monitoring and review has continued since the amalgamation of the VECs and the Training Centre to form GRETB. The review team agreed that the quality assurance unit at GRETB is taking a proactive approach to further enhance programme monitoring and review. It was confirmed during the review week that the information provided in the self-evaluation report was accurate and there is evidence that programmes are regularly reviewed. SOLAS provides the training and assessment materials for craft apprenticeships. However, meetings with apprenticeship tutors revealed that some content in these apprenticeships is outdated and needs to be revised.

During the review week, it was demonstrated that feedback is received from teaching staff, providers and learners, as well as from all stakeholders. There are ongoing legacy issues that need to be addressed and it is anticipated that with “the integration of QA systems, the harmonisation of legacy assessment will be addressed” (SER, p 78). The development by GRETB of the National Programme Board as part of the governance structure of the Arboriculture Apprenticeship highlights the positive impact a governing body responsible for programme monitoring and review can have. In addition, improvements to the post-2016 apprenticeship programme and revalidation of at least three existing programmes (SER, p 77) illustrates the immediate ongoing implementation of procedures for better assuring a positive learner experience. It was also noted during the first day of review sessions with the QA Oversight Group that “we are hiring a new staff member for monitoring and curriculum review as there is a gap there and the Technology Support Unit will also feed in. It is in its infancy and will need tweaking. There is a cultural shift internally and this is remarkable.” However, during the review week there was some evidence that the ICT facilities for the programmes are sometimes outdated (i.e., old versions of software). The review team notes the limited staffing in the IT Department, as mentioned earlier in this document.

Some concern still exists around programme review. When asked “Do [GRETB] review their programmes?”, one reply was “... that’s the big question”, and another comment indicated “frequently this is done at the end of the year, and only reflects the views of those who succeeded on the programme and not the views of those who dropped out, which is a weakness, in that they are the views that would be enormously beneficial”.

The SER states clearly that each centre is responsible for its own approach to programme review (SER, p 76). The review team considers the possibility of new quality assurance policies being broadened to extend to every centre as part of a collegiate umbrella while also each centre and

department remaining autonomous and empowered enough to effect rapid change based on local experience and community need. These are the topics GRETB are rigorously addressing in trying to streamline and implement a coherent and consistent picture of programmes being delivered across all campuses. It is the opinion of the review team that GRETB is doing an admirable job of meeting the needs of statutory bodies, existing legacy structures, senior management, and - most importantly - the learners and community stakeholders, those depending most upon consistent, up-to-date programme delivery.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that GRETB continue to focus on the needs of external stakeholders and employers. This would involve linking “graduate tracking” to the programme monitoring and review process to check if the educational needs of the learners have been sufficiently met as they enter employment or continued education and to ascertain why some of them might drop out of programmes completely.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

GRETB works with a number of external stakeholders on an ongoing basis from the Department of Social Protection to industry and employers and community groups to higher education. Formal engagement with key external partners involves different procedures. Contracted training providers are monitored by the Contracted Training Officers who are under the direction of the assistant manager and work closely with the QA Department (SER, p 79). QA standards and TQAS guidelines and the guidelines of other certifying bodies must be followed. Coordinating apprenticeship providers must commit to memoranda of agreement which set out quality assurance standards.

Furthermore, the Apprenticeship programme with 620 participants requires a strong engagement with employers. Relationships with employers have been steadily growing and GRETB has been using various channels to strengthen these connections.

One positive development has been the establishment of the FET Enterprise Unit which brings a more collaborative approach to employer engagement. While at the early stages, it will improve oversight, monitoring and review of training provision. A member of the senior management team made the comment that the FET Enterprise Unit would add to quality provision in the ETB. Given the geographic spread of GRETB’s partners across two counties it is challenging to adopt a single

method of oversight. However, what GRETB excel at are the relationships that they build with external partners. During the review week, there was consistently positive feedback on the nature and depth of working relationships with GRETB with contributors to this report stating high levels of trust, empathy, understanding and a willingness to problem-solve. One member of the Community Training Centre staff commented “There are good relationships with GRETB, community training centres have been around for 30 years, there are long established patterns and strong working relationships, they meet 4 times a year, back and forth during the pandemic”.

During the review week, the post-pandemic landscape of education provision was raised. Learners mentioned the importance of blended learning, especially in rural areas where difficulties arise with public transport and childcare.

Commendation

- The review team commends GRETB on the exceptional investment it has made in relationship-building and in listening and responding to external parties. This practice is valued throughout the GRETB ecosystem in Galway and Roscommon.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that GRETB further develop its procedures for engaging in external stakeholder relationships.

Section

4

Conclusions



Section 4: Conclusions

The review team would like to acknowledge the work of the ETB in compiling a very comprehensive SER and also in providing all documentation requested in an open and prompt manner. Furthermore, meetings with staff, learners and stakeholders were honest and sincere. The enthusiasm of the staff and the satisfaction of the learners reflects positively on the ETB.

4.1 Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

Within the context of the overall governance structures of the ETB and its 2017-2021 Strategy Statement, GRETB has improved and enhanced its governance and management of Quality Assurance in recent years. The review team is confident that all the necessary quality councils and committees have now been established and are meeting regularly. The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for QA and the FET Quality Council oversees the work of the QA Steering Group, the FET Programme Board and the Apprenticeship Quality Council. These committees in turn have established sub-committees and working groups which report to them. It was evident that a wide cohort of staff and stakeholders are represented on the different groups, and this ensures that QA is embedded in the structures across the ETB. The ETB adheres to QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines and Sector-Specific QA guidelines, and the review team noted that the ETB has adopted an active policy development process, is reviewing its policies and plans to document all internal QA policies and procedures and publish them on GRETB Connect.

The ETB has embraced the values and aspirations of its Vision and Mission statements and its Core Values (SER, p 19) and has now used the Self Evaluation Review to further scrutinise its operations and improve its quality structures. The four different QA systems in existence at the time of the transfer of the Training Centre to the ETB are now reduced to two and the ETB has plans to streamline this to one QA system.

During the review week it was evident that the ETB has already responded to challenges identified in the SER and has introduced new measures to address many of the issues which had arisen.

The review team found that GRETB has the necessary arrangements for Governance and Management of Quality Assurance in place but furthermore has taken an approach where quality is

central to everything that they do, is embedded in processes and is part of the culture of the organisation. Enthusiasm for the development and maintenance of a culture of quality was evident in discussions with staff, learners and stakeholders. The review team also noted the adherence to quality procedures and processes during the difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.2 Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The review team found that arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment are regarded as part of the overall quality assurance processes of the ETB. Recruitment of teaching staff is conducted in a professional manner by the HR department and there was evidence that all nationally agreed procedures are followed. However, there are some issues regarding sourcing teaching staff, particularly in Gaeltacht and remote areas. There is evidence of pro-active PL&D, particularly when teaching staff were required to transfer rapidly to online teaching. The review team noted strong commitment from teaching staff, especially during Covid-19 times when they quickly adapted to online teaching and assessment. Throughout the review week, teaching staff spoke with enthusiasm about their work and learners repeatedly gave examples of how they were assisted in their learning by ETB staff.

The arrangements during the Covid-19 period were particularly impressive when teaching staff not only adapted their teaching to suit the new online learning but were also available to learners as a support during times of isolation. Efforts were made to keep learners involved and to ensure that they completed their assignments so that, where possible, they could graduate from their courses. It is evident that strong support is available for learners at risk of disadvantage and that measures are in place to support those with special needs or other challenges to learning.

Furthermore, the learning environment differed according to location with more facilities available in the larger centres. The review team is satisfied that the ETB is planning its capital requirements and is actively seeking funding to expand and upgrade many of its facilities.

Assessment processes are supported by clearly documented policies and procedures and the feedback on assessment practices in the SER and during the review week was positive.

4.3 Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The information provided by the SER, the review sessions and the meetings during the review visit, suggests that GRETB has achieved significant progress in realising self-evaluation, monitoring and the review of educational processes. Staff, learners and stakeholders have participated throughout.

First of all, GRETB have set up a comprehensive QA system in order to compose the SER. In addition, they realised significant progression in setting up a holistic system of quality assurance. In cooperation with different units of GRETB and with a wide diversity of staff, they identified gaps during the process of completing the SER and implemented improvements to optimise the learning process for their learners. As a result, GRETB seems to embrace a culture of quality, in which staff, external stakeholders, and learners can be involved. In particular, by increasing the capacity of the QA Department, GRETB seems to take quality assurance as a serious and important part of the organisational capacity of their ETB. A possible next step in the development of a holistic system of quality assurance is the use of metrics. By setting up Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) GRETB can possibly measure the results of the implemented improvements based on the identified gaps during the quality cycle.

Second, learner experiences are very relevant during the monitoring and review of GRETB's programmes. According to the analyses of the review sessions during the review meeting, the voice of the learners does seem to matter, and influence possible improvements for GRETB's educational processes and programmes.

Thirdly, GRETB invests in its relationship with external stakeholders (e.g. employers) and collaborates intensively with cooperating partners to optimise its programmes. It would be advisable to set up standardised procedures and processes to create a durable, cooperative relationship based on clear agreements.

In summary, GRETB has made significant efforts towards self-evaluation, monitoring and review, which the review team values. Possible next steps would be the use of metrics to monitor improvement, and the creation of cooperative guidelines in collaboration with external stakeholders.

4.4 Commendations

1. The review team commends GRETB on the thoughtful and in-depth process of its quality review as demonstrated in the SER, in the Provider Profile and in the discussions during the review week. The review team appreciates the enormous efforts of GRETB in conducting a strong evidence-based self-evaluation in cooperation with staff members, external stakeholders, and learners.
2. The review team commends GRETB on its recognition of the urgency to create more formalised and managed quality assurance systems within the ETB and the follow-on creation and development of a dedicated QA Department.
3. The review team commends the agility of the IT team in responding rapidly to the requirements of teaching, learning and QA during the Covid-19 pandemic.
4. The review team commends the ETB for the PL&D opportunities and ongoing support provided to staff. The plans which are underway to develop an organisation wide PL&D policy are also to be commended.
5. The review team commends the positive, open, flexible, and proactive relationship between individual centres and their communities which is a core value for GRETB.
6. The review team commends GRETB staff on their collaborative work with other ETBs in the development of new curricula and programmes.
7. The review team commends GRETB on the excellent clear pathways they have provided to learners to assist them in progressing in their learning journey, and on the guidance given to ensure the optimum outcomes for learners.
8. The review team commends GRETB on the development of a quality culture across the organisation, as was strongly evidenced during the review week. The “onerous task” of preparing and participating in the evaluation process has effected positive change and brought even more rigor to the integrity of learner results.
9. The review team highly commends the steps taken by GRETB to realise data management in compliance with GDPR. The review team further commends the ETB for ensuring accessibility of information for learners which is vitally important in stimulating and involving learners in their learning process.
10. The review team commends GRETB for the establishment of the FET Enterprise Unit and the Provision and Pathways Unit as these create a cohesiveness that was previously lacking in targeted communication.
11. The review team commends the ETB for its ongoing work to improve the existing infrastructure - specific to IT supports and communications - which will allow for sustainable and ongoing improvement to the learning environment.
12. The review team commends GRETB for its awareness of and response to emotional and mental health and well-being of learners which was evidenced in the SER and during the review week. The supports and services made available through the response to Covid-19

were very well received by learners, staff and ultimately stakeholders and it is hoped they continue to be part of GRETB's culture of quality.

13. The review team noted, in the SER and during the review sessions, that the monitoring and review phase of the quality cycle is being well implemented in GRETB. The review team commends the steps already taken to build upon the findings of its self-evaluation and make needed adjustments in order to address observed challenges (i.e., staffing, communication, etc.). This enhances the awareness and implementation of QA and ensures that self-evaluation, as an essential element of QA, is being nurtured and encouraged.
14. The review team commends GRETB on the exceptional investment it has made in relationship-building and in listening and responding to external parties. This practice is valued throughout the GRETB ecosystem in Galway and Roscommon.

4.5 Recommendations

1. The review team noted the lack of learner representation on GRETB's governance groups. It is recommended that the ETB examine ways of including the learner voice throughout the organisation and that formal means of ensuring learner representation on executive boards and committees be explored with other ETBs and the relevant government departments.
2. The review team recommends that all QA documentation be digitised in accordance with GDPR best practice. It should be centralised and made available to staff in accordance with a hierarchy of access depending on role.
3. The review team recommends that, based on COVID-19 experiences, the ETB continue to use the digital environment to support and extend PL&D. This should be extended to include apprenticeship tutors in profession linked PL&D activities.
4. The review team recommends that the ETB, in addressing the changing needs in programmes, explore the skill sets of existing teaching, instructing and tutor staff, to identify subject matter expertise that they may have, and which could be utilised. In addressing the difficulties of recruiting teaching staff, particularly in Gaeltacht and rural areas, pathways should be explored to encourage recently qualified learners to upskill and become FET practitioners.
5. The review team recommends that the ETB continue to work on new programme development to address the changing needs of industry, society and learners.
6. GRETB has stated its commitment "to ensure that a Recognition of Prior Learning Service is available to learners" and to the development of a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (SER, p 46). The review team recommends that the ETB continue with the development of this service to allow for its early introduction across centres.

7. The review team recommends that the ETB work in conjunction with SOLAS and other bodies to develop a system of tracking graduates, to explore use of IT in graduate tracking and in line with European examples.
8. The review team recommends that the ETB review the changes to the IV and EA processes that have been implemented as a result of Covid-19 with a view to making them standard thus reducing the paper-heavy trail and making the IV process more streamlined and time efficient. The ETB should also continue to recruit EAs to ensure subject matter experts are available across all centres and programmes.
9. The basic foundation of information and data management in GRETB is adequately organised and in compliance with GDPR. The review team recommends that GRETB continue to address the issue of staff shortages in the IT department. All data management systems should be checked to ensure they meet GDPR guidelines, including Multi-Factor Authentication, where required.
10. The review team recommends that GRETB further examine the issue of communications to ensure that members of the public and prospective learners are aware of the extent of the services it offers. It is recommended that new GRETB continue with the work already underway to develop a shared sectoral identity and communication strategy as outlined in the SER (p 57).
11. The review team recommends that GRETB continue to develop and implement a consistent approach to blended learning and delivery which would be available to learners across all centre locations. It is recommended that the momentum and the effective internal practice that was begun as a response to Covid-19 be continued and that GRETB liaise with other ETBs to address regulatory and other issues which might arise.
12. The review team observed very good practice at the majority of centre locations and recommends that GRETB streamline methods to take this best practice and implement it at smaller and rural locations.
13. The review team emphasises the necessity of using KPIs to review, monitor and evaluate the quality of the educational process. Consequently, the review team recommends the development and maintenance of a system of metrics based on KPIs to measure and analyse the progression of the training and education provided. In this way, achievements can be recognised, and any shortcomings addressed.
14. The review team recommends that GRETB continue to focus on the needs of external stakeholders and employers. This would involve linking “graduate tracking” to the programme monitoring and review process to check if the educational needs of the learners have been sufficiently met as they enter employment or continued education and to ascertain why some of them might drop out of programmes completely.
15. The review team recommends that GRETB further develop its procedures for engaging in external stakeholder relationships.

4.6 Statements on Quality Assurance

The review team was impressed by the strong implementation over recent months, of a solid system of quality assurance within GRETB, and would like to highly commend their efforts. GRETB achieved a significant step in their quality system, which can be used for optimising the learning process for learners in their region. A diverse range of staff, external stakeholders and learners are frequently involved in the quality cycle at GRETB. Therefore, the review team would like to emphasise four statements.

(1) GRETB has incorporated an effective system of quality assurance with the necessary procedures and a high level of implementation.

Quality assurance can only be constructive if most of the staff, learners and external stakeholders are involved. The capacity required to manage the quality processes needs to be sufficient, since quality assurance is a time-consuming effort for an ETB. The steps taken by GRETB show that, in addition to expanding the staff capacity of the QA department, all relevant actors have been involved in the process of quality assurance.

(2) GRETB incorporated existing quality assurance procedures, which adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies.

During the main review visit, and in conjunction with an analysis of the SER, it was evident to the review team that GRETB has incorporated the required quality assurance procedures. In addition to the completion of the SER, GRETB implemented several necessary steps and procedures for quality assurance (e.g. the annual Quality Improvement Plan, External Authentication, Internal Verification and organising Results Approval Process meetings). All necessary steps have been carried out.

(3) GRETB places an emphasis on providing supports for learners and especially focuses on achieving an increase in access, transfer and progression by learners involved in Further and Higher Education and Training.

During the main review visit the review team noticed that GRETB acknowledges the opinions of learners and aims to increase the opportunities for their involvement in the education and training process. They have provided significant services to optimise access, transfer and progression. The review team greatly values this important service and the support for GRETB learners.

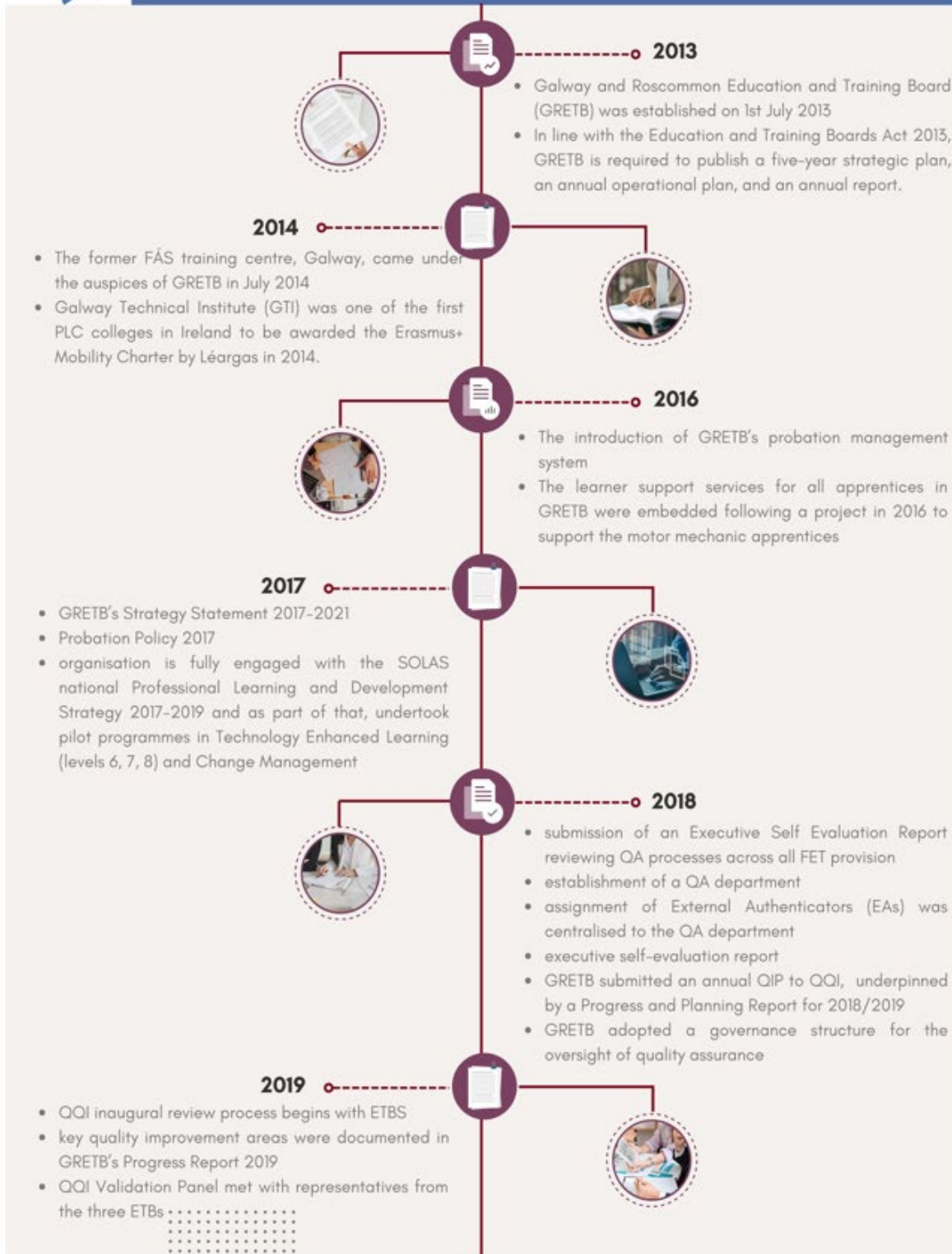
(4) GRETB has enhanced its quality review system to a high level, which ensures a durable system of quality assurance.

To sum up, based on the analysis of the SER and the review sessions and meetings during the main review visit, the review team acknowledges GRETB's impressive investment in quality assurance. Although there are areas that could be improved, a sound foundation of quality assurance has been established of which GRETB can be very proud.



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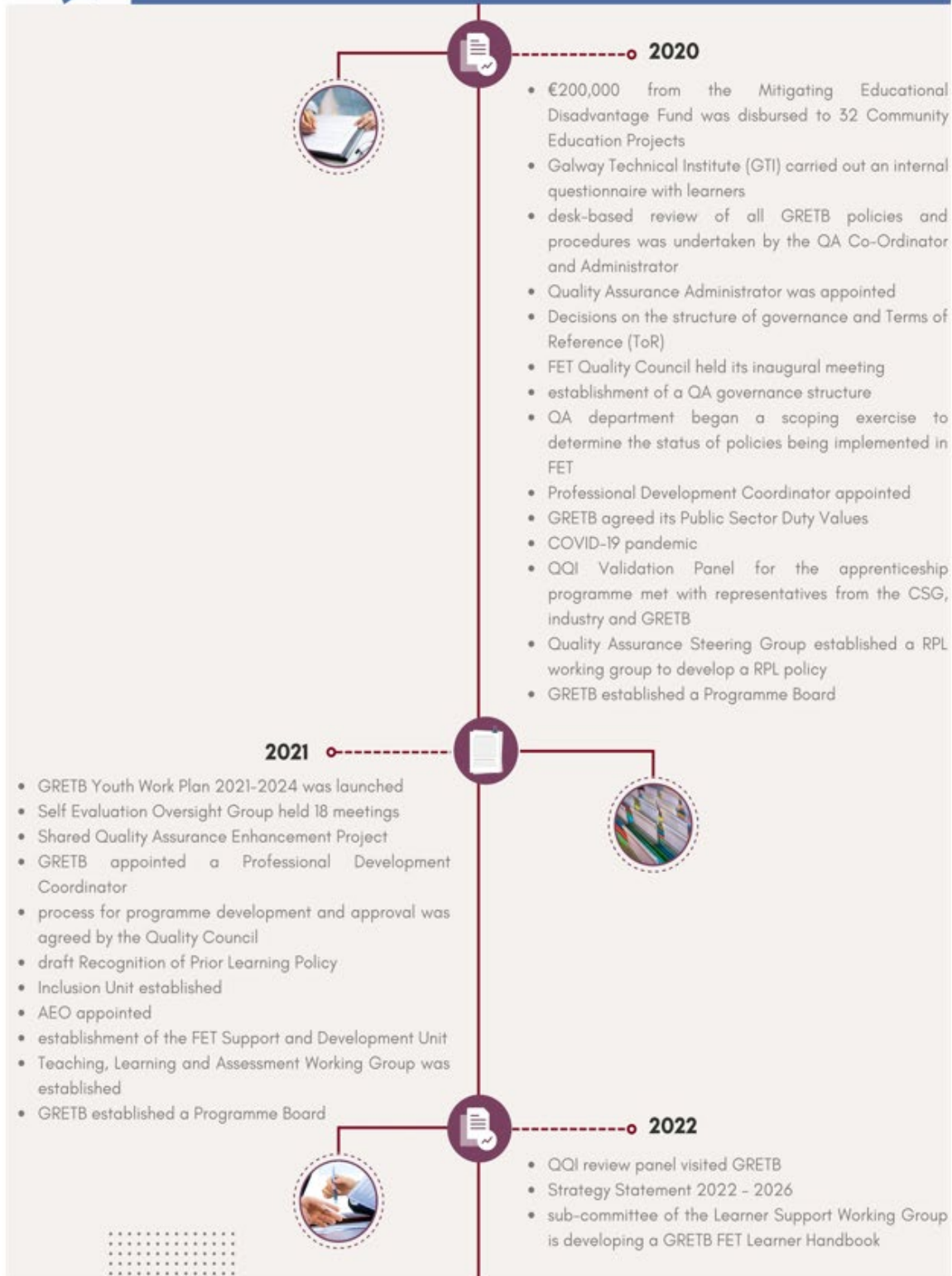
GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON ETB





TIMELINE

GALWAY AND ROSCOMMON ETB



Section

5

ETB Review Response



Section 5: ETB Review Response

Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report

Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board welcomes this QQI Inaugural Review Report. The experience of engaging in the production of the self-evaluation report and the subsequent engagement with the independent review panel has been an extremely positive one for Galway and Roscommon ETB. Both the preparation for the inaugural review and the participation in the weeklong dialogue with the panel members has facilitated an organisation- wide reflection on the significant developments, achievements, and successes of both learners and staff over the last number of years. This has been a very valuable and worthwhile process.

We would like to acknowledge the extremely professional, courteous, and enthusiastic approach by the panel members in all of their engagements with GRETB staff and stakeholders across the week. It is of particular significance to GRETB that the review team acknowledges that our “Mission and Vision centres on the experience of the learner, [and that] the review team saw strong evidence of that mission”. We are also particularly pleased to note amongst the commendations:

- GRETB’s thoughtful and in-depth process of its quality review and the strong evidence of self-evaluation.
- The excellent, clear pathways GRETB provides to learners to assist them in progressing in their learning journey.
- The development of a quality culture across GRETB and the strong evidence of that during the review week.
- The establishment of the FET Enterprise Unit and the Provision and Pathways Unit to create a greater cohesiveness.
- GRETB’s awareness of, and response to, the emotional and mental health and well-being of its learners.

The organisation equally welcomes the recommendations as included in the report. It appreciates the review team saw evidence of GRETB’s response to the challenges identified in the self-evaluation in advance of the review week and the new measures already introduced to address these issues. We look forward to further engaging with QQI to agree our continuing improvement process and with our other stakeholders in developing the structures and systems to facilitate some of these recommendations.

We would like to sincerely thank the members of the review panel for their thoughtful and genuine engagement throughout the review and to QQI personnel for their support and guidance along the way. We pay particular tribute to GRETB staff, learners, and to all of our stakeholders who were central to the success of this inaugural review process. We look forward with great positivity to the next phase of quality improvements in Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board.

David Leahy

Chief Executive

Sinéad Morgan

Director, Further Education and Training



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Appendices

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

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

1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 QQI established Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in April 2016, and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in May 2017⁵. These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

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

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

1.4 As outlined in QQI's Core QA Guidelines, quality and its assurance are the responsibility of the provider, i.e. an ETB, and review and self-evaluation of quality is a fundamental element of an

⁵ Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (QQI, 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).

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

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

2 Purposes

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

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through
<p>1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs</p>	<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:

- 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
- 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
- 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;⁶

- 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

⁶ <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 follows⁷:

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:

⁷ 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, 28 February 2022			
Theme: QA Governance			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
8.45-9.00	Private Review Team space		
09.00-09.30	1.ETB Review Coordinator(s)/ Director of FET		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	2. ETB Chief Executive & Directors	CE Director OSD Director of Schools Director of Further Education	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
10.45-11.15am	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15 - 11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15	3. QA Oversight Group (Self Evaluation Steering Group)	Head of Corporate Services (Chairperson) AEO Training Centre Manager QA Administrator Director of Further Education QA Co-ordinator AEO Compliance Officer	Discussion of the experience of implementing quality assurance and mechanism for strategic monitoring and evaluation.
12.15-12.45pm	Panel Review Team Meeting		
12.45pm- 1.30pm	Review Team Lunch/Break		

1.30-2.15 pm	4. Parallel sessions - Experience of Quality Assurance		
	Parallel Session 4A. Quality Council	Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, GMIT	Discussion of the approach to and mechanisms for quality assurances and enhancements
		Head of Access Centre, NUIG	
		Principal GTI	
		Principal Clarin College	
		Former Academic Co-ordinator, Adult Training and Education Studies, NUIG	
		AEO	
		QA Coordinator	
		Director of FET	
	Parallel Session 4B. QA Steering Group	FET Manager Athenry	Discussion of the experience of implementing quality assurance and mechanism for strategic monitoring and evaluation.
		PLSS Coordinator	
		VTOS Coordinator	
		Assistant Manager, Training Centre	
		Adult Literacy Organiser	
		Youthreach Coordinator	
2.15-2.45 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
2.45-3 pm	Review Team Break		
3 pm-3.45 pm	5. Parallel sessions with current learners		
	Parallel Session 5A. Current Learners (Level 1-3)	Dóchas Don Óige	
		Community Education Learner	
		Community Education Learner	
		Youthreach, Tuam	
		Ballinasloe Training Workshop	
		Youthreach, Tuam	
		Adult basic Education	
	2.ETB Employer Engagement Function	VTOS	
		Ballinasloe FET	

		PLC Learner, GCC	
		PLC and Erasmus	
		BTEI	
		VTOS	
	Parallel Session 5C. Current Learners Apprenticeship	Motor Mechanic	
		Arborist	
		Arborist	
		Auctioneer	
		Motor Mechanic	
		ICT	
	Butchery		
3.45-4.15pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.15-4.30 pm	Review Team Break		
4.30-5.15 pm	6. Parallel sessions: Past Learners		
	Parallel Session 6A. Past Learners - Unaccredited and Levels 1-3	Adult Basic Education	Discussion of learner experience
		Youthreach	
		Dóchas Don Oíge	
		Community Education	
		Community Education	
		Adult Basic Education	
	Parallel Session 6B.Past learners (Levels 4-6)	Auctioneering Apprenticeship	
		BTEI Roscommon	
		VTOS	
		Ballinasloe FET	
		PLC and Erasmus	
		VTOS	
		BTEI	
		VTOS	
5.15-5.45 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Tuesday 1 March 2022			
Theme: Teaching, Learning and Assessment experience			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	1.ETB Review Coordinator		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45 am	2. Parallel sessions with FET Coordinators		
	Parallel Session 2A: Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators -Level 1-3 provision	Adult Literacy Organiser	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Youthreach Co-ordinator	
		Head Teacher, Castlerea Prison Education Centre	
		Adult Basic Education	
		EROC (Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre)	
		Turas, Galway City (Turas is a pilot project which provides an educational and personal/social development programme for young people aged 12-15 years in Galway City and county whose placement in mainstream education has broken down. The programme covers QQI Level 3 in General Learning and non-accredited programmes e.g. cookery, mindfulness, humanities.)	
	Parallel Session 2B. Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators Level 4-6 provision (including training provision)	VTOS Coordinator, Roscommon	
		VTOS/BTEI Coordinator, Rosmuc	
		PLC Coordinator, GCC	
		BTEI Coordinator	
		VTOS/BTEI	
		Manager Outdoor Education Centre	
		Training Centre, Manager	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		

11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15PM	3. Parallel sessions with Academic Staff, cross section of service		
	3A. Academic staff, cross section of services (unaccredited, 1-3)	Education Centre, Prison Service Castlerea	Discussion of the experience of implementing quality assurance and enhancement
		Adult Basic Education	
		Community Education	
		Youthreach	
		Adult Basic Education	
		Adult Basic Education	
		EROC	
		Youthreach	
		Youthreach Resource	
	3B. Academic staff, cross section of services (4-6)	PLC Teacher, Clarin College	
		VTOS	
		VTOS	
		VTOS/BTEI Rosmuc	
		GTI	
		BTEI	
		Carpentry and Joinery Instructor/TEL Supports	
	3C. Apprenticeship tutors	IT Support Instructor	
		Arborist	
Metal Fabrication			
ICT			
Plumbing			
Electrical			
	Auctioneering		
12:15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45pm-1.30pm	Review Team Lunch/Break		

1.30-2.15 pm	4. Parallel sessions with support services		
	4A. Pathways - Information Recruitment, Guidance and Advocates	Guidance Coordinator	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression.
		Acting Information Officer (Guidance)	
		Adult Guidance Counsellor	
		Adult Guidance Counsellor	
		Guidance Information Officer	
		Advocacy Officer	
		Training Centre Recruitment	
	4B. Learner support services staff	Literacy Tutor	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement of support services to learners.
		Youthreach SEN	
		ESOL/Literacy	
		Learning Support, GCC	
		TEL Coordinator	
		TEL/Learner Support Working Group	
		Inclusion Unit Manager	
2.15-2.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
2.45-3 pm	Review Team Break		
3-3.45 pm	5. Programme Development and Approval		
	5A. (Programme Development and Approval)	Adult Education Guidance Counsellor	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of programme development and approval
		QA Coordinator	
		ELC Programme Manager	
		VTOS Coordinator, Letterfrack	
		Training Centre Manager	
		Chairperson Programme Board	
	5B. (Programme Development and Collaboration with third parties)	MSLETB	
		WWETB	
		NW Forestry Services	
		OPW	
		Apprenticeships, GRETB	

		AEO (Quality), DDLETB	
3.45-4.15 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.15-4.30 pm	Review Team Break		
4.30-5.15 pm	6.Working groups - EA group, blended learning, learner support, TLA, RPL, policy development	RPL	Discussion of role of the committee in quality assurance and enhancement
		Blended learning policy/learner support/digital badge	
		Policy Development	
		Teaching, Learning and Assessment	
		EA/RAP	
	EA/RAP		
5.15-5.45 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Wednesday 2 March, 2022			
Theme: External Stakeholders			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	1.ETB Review Coordinator		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	2.ETB Employer Engagement Function	Training Centre Manager	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in quality assuring provision
		Employment Engagement Officer	
		Skills for work advisor	
		Contracted Training Officer	
		Erasmus Coordinator, Deputy Principal GTI	
	Authorised Officer		
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		

11.30-12.15 pm	3. External Stakeholders eg Employer and Regional Skills Bodies	Regional Skills Forum Manager, enables a single contact point in each region to help employers connect with the range of services and supports available across the education and training system	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		IDA Western Manager (Role of IDA – supports a range of overseas companies from small high growth businesses to large multinationals)	
		Department of Social Protection (Intreo Office) - link officer between the Intreo office Galway and GRETB. Intreo is a government agency which is the single point of contact for all employment, social welfare and income support	
		HR Manager Penn Engineering. Penn is an multi-national organisation which has an operational facility in Galway.	
		Owner/Manager: Treat Café is a family run catering business, it operates 2 cafes, supplies a catering service to a number of large schools, operates pop-up shops and outsourced catering businesses throughout Galway.	
		Owner/SME: Mary has been in the property business for over 25 years and she is the owner of the henry auctioneering. She is also an instructor on the auctioneering apprenticeship.	
12.15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.30pm	Review Team Break		
1.30-2.15 pm	4. External Stakeholders (Contracted Trainers)	Assistant Manager Contracted Training	Discussion of quality assurance arrangements of programmes leading to awards of different awarding bodies.
		Contracted Training Officer	
		QA Eden Training	
		Owner/Manager KT Business	

		Manager, Compupac	
		Manager, Eden Training	
2.15-2.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
2.45-3.00 pm	Review Team Break		
3pm-3.45 pm	5.External Stakeholders (Higher Education Representatives)	Director, Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development, NUIG	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEI's
		Head of Access Centre, NUI Galway	
		Widening Participation Officer, NUIG	
		Assistant Registrar (Quality), GMIT	
		Access and Participation Officer, GMIT	
3.45-4.15 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.15-4.30 pm	Review Team Break		
4.30-5.15 pm	6. Professional and Administration Services (Corporate Services, Finance, HR and Facilities/IT)	Head of Human Resources	Discussion of the relationship between the ETB's quality assurance system and its professional functions
		Head of Finance	
		Head of IT	
		Corporate Services (policy development)	
		Head of Buildings	
		Head of Corporate Services includes Communications	
		Director of OSD	
		Quality Assurance	
5.15-5.45 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Thursday 3rd March 2022			
Theme: Quality Assurance			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	1.ETB Review Coordinator		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	2. QA Unit	QA Coordinator	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality
		Administration Officer	
		Training Standards Officer	
		QA Unit	
		QA Unit	
		Director of FET	
	AEO		
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15	3. Second Providers	Roscommon LEADER Partnership	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		Roscommon Women's Network	
		National Learning Network (NLN)	
		An Chistin Local Training Initiative	
		Tuam Community Training Centre	
		Community Training Centre Galway	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.30	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.30-2.15 pm	4. Learners from second providers	An Chistin (Local Training Initiative)	Discussion of learner experience of second providers including discussion of quality assessment and enhancement procedures
		Justice Centre	
		National Learning Network (NLN)	
		Ballaghaderreen/Boyle Local Training Initiative	
		Community Training Centre Galway	

		Roscommon Women's Network (Local Training Initiative) Healthcare L5	
2.15-2.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
2.45-3pm	Review Team Break		
3pm-3.45 pm	5. Community Education Facilitators	Community Education Facilitator	Discussion of the role of CEF in supporting community groups
		Community Education Facilitator	
		Community Education Facilitator	
		AEO	
3.45-4.15 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.15-4.30 pm	Review Team Break		
4.30 pm-5.15 pm	6. External stakeholders - Community Providers and Groups	Roscommon LEADER Partnership	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups
		Brothers of Charity Services Ireland	
		Galway Rural Development	
		Chime (provides range of service for deaf and hard of hearing people)	
		Galway Traveller Movement	
		Galway City Partnership	
5.15pm-5.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Friday 04th March, 2022				
Theme: Wrap-up				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Role	Purpose
9-9.30	1. 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	QQI representatives will join team at 10.15 for 15 minutes.		
10.45-11.30	2. Free Session			To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
11-11.30am	3. QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director			QQI gathers feedback on the review process (Review Team not in attendance)
11.30-11.40	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.40-11.55	Initial Feedback to CE and FET Director	Chief Executive of ETB Review Team QQI representative(s)		Initial feedback is given by the Review Team to the ETB Chief Executive, in advance of the Oral Feedback
12-12.30	4. Oral Feedback: Feedback presented by Review Team Chair. Attended by ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners			Oral feedback on initial review findings
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)