QQI Review Report 2021

Inaugural Review

of Kilkenny & Carlow 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;

- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and

- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

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

The Review Team

Each inaugural review is carried out by a team of independent experts and peers. The 2021 inaugural review of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI.

The review team attended a briefing and training session with QQI on 6 October 2021 and their initial team meeting was held virtually on 11 October. The planning visit with Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board took place on 14 October 2021.

The main review visit was conducted by the full team via Microsoft Teams between 13 and 17 December 2021.

Chair – David Jones OBE DL

Mr David Jones stepped down as Chief Executive/Principal of Coleg Cambria at the end of 2019 after steering the institution to great acclaim. A champion of work-based learning, apprenticeships, fundraising and accessible education for people of all ages, he has made a vast contribution to shaping the careers of tens of thousands of youngsters and mature learners over more than three decades. Initially a chartered electronics engineer, as the CEO/Principal of Deeside College from 2004, he led its mergers from 2009 to 2013 with the Welsh College of Horticulture, Llysfasi College and Wrexham's Yale College, to create Coleg Cambria. In addition to a wide range of previous non-executive appointments, David is currently the Chair of Qualifications Wales, a board member of the Defence Electronics Component Agency (DECA) and the Wales Appeals Board of NSPCC Wales and chaired the inaugural review of Laois and Offaly ETB. He is also a commissioner for the UK-wide Independent Commission on the College of the Future, which published its initial reports in 2020.

David was the winner of the TES UK FE Leader of the year in 2017 and was awarded an OBE in 2015 for his services to education.

Coordinating Reviewer – Eleanor Howie

Eleanor Howie is the Assistant Head of Student Experience for Apprenticeships in the Faculty of Business and Law at the Open University. She is responsible for the management of associate lecturers delivering work-based learning modules at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Having previously pursued a career as a solicitor, Eleanor developed an interest in degree level apprenticeships.

She has expertise in quality assurance, particularly in relation to work-based or practice-based learning. She also has experience as an academic reviewer and member of annual review monitoring panels.

In addition to academic roles, Eleanor is interested in entrepreneurship and runs her own business. She is also the trustee of a charity.

Learner Representative – Priscilla Kieran

Priscilla Kieran lives in Dublin, is currently employed in Customs. She completed the QQI level 4 Office Skills in Fingal Adult Education service. She then went on to do a QQI level 5 Office Skills in Balbriggan. Finally completing a QQI level 6 in Customs Clearance which lead to her current employment, in the logistics sector.

These courses have been extremely beneficial, they enhanced an existing skill set and help her obtain employment in a new sector.

Peer Expert – Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha

Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha was Director of Further Education and Training with Galway and Roscommon ETB from 2016-2021. She has a BA, HDip in Education, Master's in Education (M.Ed.) and Master's in Rural Development (M.Rd).

Eithne spent over 40 years in education at 2nd level and Further Education and has had a number of leadership and management roles. Eithne designed QQI awards in Aquaculture, Tourism, and the Irish language at levels 5 and 6.and led the development of the new QQI Level 6 National Apprenticeship in Arboriculture. She has been an External Examiner since 1996 and is currently on the national panel of External Authenticators. Eithne was Chairperson of the GRETB Quality Council until her retirement in August 2021. She worked with SOLAS in developing QQI Micro-qualifications in Aquaculture as a pilot for the FET sector.

Eithne is on the Board of the Bia Innovation Food Hub in Athenry and is Co-chair of the Education Sub-committee.

Peer Expert – Tom O'Mara

Tom O'Mara has worked in online education since 1998. He has worked in commercial e-learning companies, a TV and e-learning production company, the National Adult Literacy Agency and University College Cork.

Tom developed and ran the National Adult Literacy Agency's (NALA) Distance Learning Service (DLS) from 2006 to 2015 and wrote all of NALA's (FETAC/QQI) QA Policies and Procedures. Tom also designed and developed www.writeon.ie, Ireland's only Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) site for qualifications at Levels 2 and 3. When he left NALA in 2015, the site had 35,000+ learners across 52 countries and was in use by over 200 further education settings in Ireland. NALA's accreditation system was recognised by the EU and UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning as an example of best practice in Further Education.

Since 2015, Tom has been Head of Digital Education in the Office of Vice President for Learning and Teaching in University College Cork. His role involves managing the Centre for Digital Education, whose vision is to 'empower staff to improve student learning through the best practice application of technology.' Tom's role includes Advising Staff, Training, Informing Policy Development, Evaluating Emerging Educational Technology, Outreach and National and International Collaboration.

Industry Representative – Michael Vaughan

Michael Vaughan is a graduate of GMIT and is 4th Generation Hotelier and proprietor of Vaughan Lodge Hotel, Lahinch. He is a Past President of Irish Hotels Federation, Chair of IHF Education and Training Committee, Member of Hospitality Careers Oversight Group, Member National Training Fund Advisory Group, Former Member GMIT Governing Body, External Examiner CIT, Ex External Examiner GMIT, Member of Commis Chef Apprenticeship Steering Group and a Member Kerry ETB Quality Council. Michael is a Former Chair of Hospitality Sector Careers Oversight Group, Hospitality Training Policy Activist.

Introduction and Context

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Introduction and Context for the Review

The overview of Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (KCETB) governance and management structure, as well as the profile of its operation in the region, was set out by KCETB in the Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted to QQI in 2021 as part of the review process.

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) was established on the July 1, 2013 under the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013. It is one of sixteen ETBs and was established following the amalgamation of Kilkenny and Carlow Vocational Education Committees (VECs). During 2016, KCETB formally took over the former FÁS training functions in Kilkenny and Carlow.

Overview of Service Provision

KCETB's Further Education and Training (FET) Service currently consists of 17 FET Centres and delivers accredited provision in these centres and in community-based outreach locations throughout Kilkenny and Carlow.

The SER states that in 2020 6,466 individual learners commenced a programme at a KCETB FET centre in Kilkenny or Carlow. There are 21 distinct full-time, part-time and support programmes funded through SOLAS, with other initiatives for young people funded through the Department of Children Equality Diversity Inclusion and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Department of Education (DE). The FET Service offers full-time and part-time programmes accredited by QQI, City and Guilds, CIDESCO, ITEC and other awarding bodies.

The counties of Kilkenny and Carlow are part of the South East region of Ireland and have a combined population of 156,164 people (Census 2016). Kilkenny City and Carlow Town are the main population centres with the next largest population centres being the Ferrybank area (adjacent to Waterford City), and the towns of Callan, Castlecomer, Graiguenamanagh, Tullow and Bagenalstown.

Figure 1 Location of KCETB FET Provision

Both Covid-19 and Brexit have impacted on the regional and local labour markets during 2020 and numbers receiving the unemployment and pandemic unemployment payments have risen significantly. The Covid-19 adjusted unemployment rate for December 2020 was 20.4% and included all those on the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP). It was noted by the review team (upon review o the SER) that the FET Service has strategically aligned its provision to work with those most affected to ensure they are afforded opportunities to upskill and reskill to meet the needs of an evolving labour market.

KCETB Vision and Mission

KCETB's stated vision is to "lead the development of education and training opportunities throughout our two counties by engaging with learners and communities, creating positive learning environments and experiences for people at all stages of lifelong learning, and contributing to social and economic development. In everything we do, we aim to be "the education and training service that others use as a benchmark of excellence.""

It's mission, as stated in the SER, is to "enable learners to achieve their full potential and contribute to the social, cultural, and economic development of our area and of the country."

The SER lists the core values of the organisation as follows:

- "We value learning and recognise its role in the development, cohesion, and wellbeing of society. Everything we do is guided by serving the best interests of learners and putting their voice at the core of everything we do."
- "We aim for excellence and are committed to continuous improvement throughout the organisation. We value relationships and working in collaboration within the education and training sector and with the wider community."
- "As a public service organisation, KCETB has a culture of accountability, integrity, fairness, openness, and respect."
- "We adopt high standards of professionalism, honesty, objectivity, and quality, which are central to serving all learners. We embrace diversity and are open to new ideas."

KCETB's Statement of Strategy 2017-2021 sets out three strategic goals and a number of associated actions to achieve these goals. The SER states that the organisation's strategic goals have shaped the FET Services over the past four years.

The strategic goals are outlined as follows:

- Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and outcomes for all learners
- Goal 2: Ensure that all our education and training services meet high quality standards
- Goal 3: Strengthen our links with the wider community

Governance Structure

The FET governance structure, as set out in the Provider Profile, is as follows:

The Chief Executive (CE) of KCETB is ultimately responsible for the oversight and management of KCETB in line with Education and Training Boards Act (2013), section 15. KCETB has a corporate structure which is made up of a democratically appointed board and an executive management team. The Chief Executive is accountable to the board, consisting of 21 members, for the performance of KCETB's executive functions.

The executive functions of KCETB relate to service provision in education and training and to corporate and operational matters. The work of KCETB is structured across three pillars; Schools, Organisation Support and Development (OSD), and FET.

Operational Structure of FET Service

The Director of FET has responsibility for 21 separate programmes and a number of associated services across Kilkenny and Carlow.

The FET Senior Management Team (SMT) comprises of the three Adult Education Officers (AEOs), the Training Services Manager and Assistant Manager, a FET Deputy Principal and a FET Principal. Each of these managers has responsibility for specific overarching areas as well as a number of programmes within FET as detailed in the Figure below.
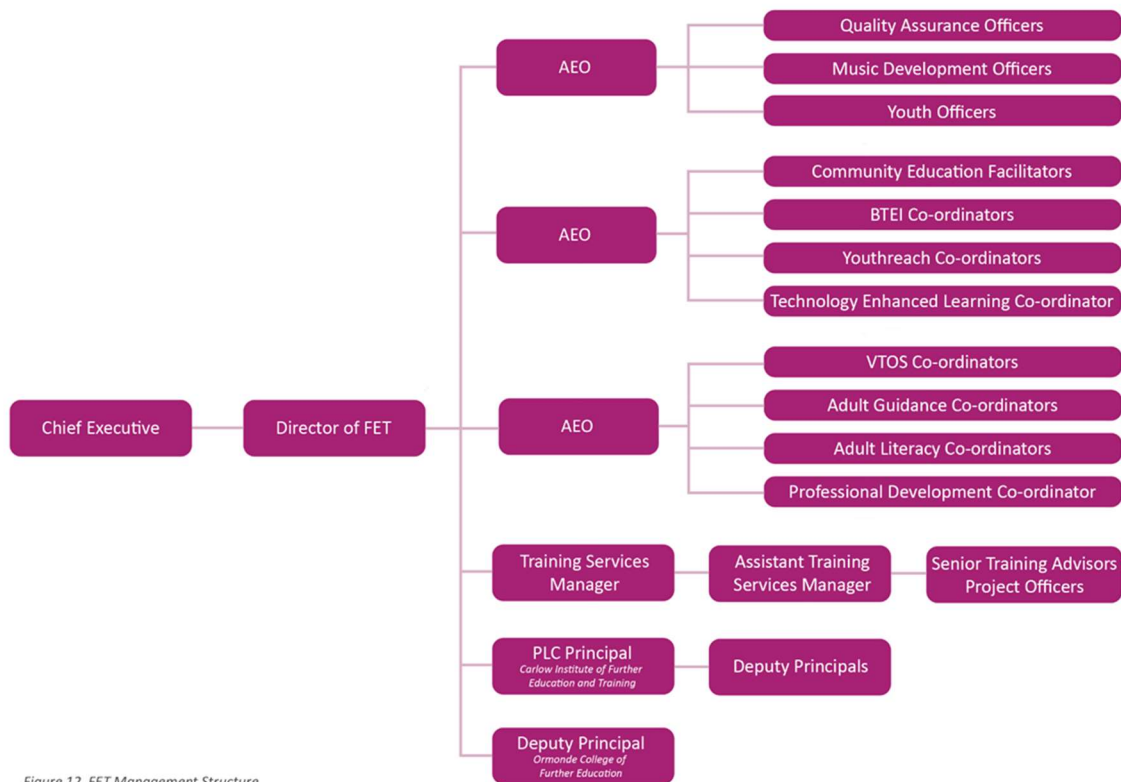
Figure 12 FET Management Structure

Management of QA

Following on from the Executive Self Evaluation Report, KCETB established a Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC) in September 2018. The Committee is chaired by the Director of FET. The role of the QAOC is to oversee all aspects of QA related to the design, development, approval, implementation and review of the FET provision offered by KCETB.

The work of this committee was initially informed by the recommendations of the Executive Self Evaluation Report (2018) and the annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

The QAOC established working groups to advance the recommendations arising from the report. The SER states that the working groups have an important role in the development of QA policies, processes and procedures which are in turn approved by the QAOC.

The QAOC now monitors the progress of all working groups, recommends programmes for approval or validation and drives the strategic direction of QA within KCETB.

KCETB has had a QA Officer since 2016 and the QA Team was expanded in January 2020 with the addition of a QA Coordinator and Staff Officer. This team is managed by an AEO who has responsibility for QA and other areas of FET provision.

The QA team oversee the development, implementation and co-ordination of the QA policies and procedures under the direction of the Director of FET and the QAOC. The QA Team ensures that the Core and Sector Specific QQI QA Guidelines, along with the Statutory QA Guidelines, are fully integrated into the QA procedures and that they are implemented consistently across all provision.

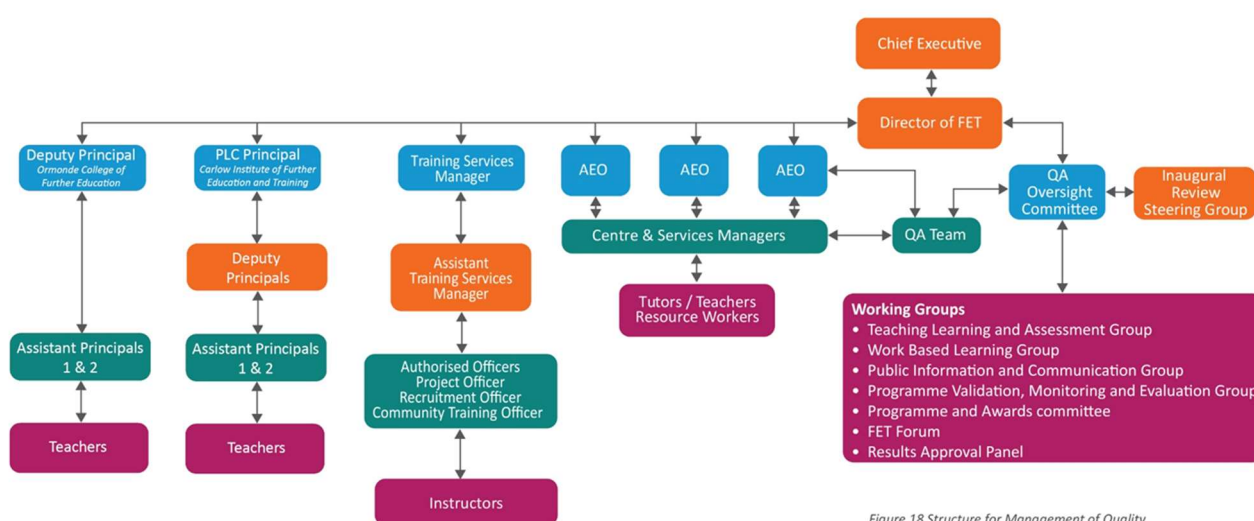KCETB's management structure for QA is shown in the Figure below.

Figure 18 Structure for Management of Quality

Covid-19

On 12 March 2020, when the government announced public health restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, KCETB developed a contingency plan to ensure the continued provision of essential FET services and certification and to support learners as far as possible.

The SER states that the assessment process was reviewed, and alternative programme modules included. Alternative assessment options and authentication processes were also introduced to ensure that learners could complete their assessment and that the integrity of the awards would not be compromised.

A significant number of programmes were affected because learners could not complete the mandatory work placement module. An alternative module was introduced to overcome this for many awards. All modifications relating to this change were approved by the QAOC.

Additional QA processes for alternative assessments were also approved by the QAOC and their implementation overseen by the QA team.

Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

The Self-evaluation Process

KCETB established a Quality Assurance and Oversight Committee (QAOC) in September 2018. Membership includes the Chief Executive and a Board Member. In February 2020 the QAOC began the self-evaluation process for the inaugural Review. The review team is of the opinion that the process was clear, comprehensive, transparent and inclusive, and is clearly articulated in the SER.

As part of this process, an Inaugural Review Steering Group (IRSG) was established by the QAOC in October 2020. The IRSG is Chaired by the Director of FET and has thirteen members. Membership is broadly from FET, other ETB senior and middle management, and the QA Team. There are four external members, with these being from Institute of Technology Carlow, South East Regional Skills Forum, a past learner, and a FET subject matter expert.

The IRSG did not have any representation from other key stakeholders such as current learners, employers, second providers or a Board Member. However, these constituencies were engaged in the consultation phase which was completed in January to March 2021.

The final SER was agreed by the IRSG in June 2021 and presented to the QAOC for endorsement. Records of meetings of the Board, Executive Team and QA is reported monthly to the Chief executive at the Executive Team Meeting. QA is reported to the KCETB Board by the Director of FET as part of the Chief Executive's report to the ETB Board (Two members of the QAOC are members of the EMT). A member of the KCETB Board sits on the QAOC and is involved in all documentation and decisions needing approval.

It should be recognised that, although it was not highlighted as a major difficulty by KCETB in the SER or during the review week, the whole process has been undertaken during a period of challenge and disruption caused by Covid-19. This interrupted KCETB's plans, but alternative online arrangements were put in place, and this facilitated an extensive range of consultation events. Internal and external communication was strongly emphasised during KCETB's Inaugural Review Process, and this was evidenced through various bespoke text and video materials provided to the review team.

The vast majority of those met by the review team during the review week were aware, to varying degrees, of the self-evaluation process. The greatest awareness was from senior staff, members of the QA Team, and those who were members of the IRSG. The review team found that other

members of staff's awareness was often superficial, and there was little evidence of knowledge of the recommendations and action plan that has resulted from the process.

Once the inaugural review process has been concluded, KCETB will need to decide if the IRSG is to be retained and/or modified. If retained, the review team is of the view that KCETB will need to ensure that it does not create an unsustainable and potentially nugatory parallel approach to other institutional quality assurance and performance improvement structures and processes that are led through its QAOC.

The Self-evaluation Report

The SER is a comprehensive document and KCETB used the QQI framework and guidance to inform its structure and content.   The review team finds that following a useful Glossary of Terms, the Introduction is very informative, providing useful background to the formation of KCETB, the communities that it serves, the region within which it operates, and its "QA Journey in FET", which includes a detailed overview of its approach to QA and the way in which it has approached the Inaugural Review.

The main part of the report is made up of three chapters, each of which deal with an objective from in QQI's Review Handbook. Each chapter is substantial, and makes use of a range of illustrations, such as diagrams, some data, and photographs. Most of these are helpful but there is some duplication that does not improve the clarity of the report. The review team is of the view that the SER would benefit from greater use of data and further illustrations that add value to the document.

Within each of the three main chapters, the subsections of each Objective conclude with a list of recommendations. At the end of each chapter, there is also an Evaluation of Outcomes table, and a further list of recommendations for the whole of the objective covered. Furthermore, after the conclusion of the report, there is a list of twelve "Quality Areas", together with associated tasks and responsibilities.

The review team did not find it immediately easy to understand nor identify the source of each of these sections, nor how they all linked together. The recommendations would benefit from clarification in relation to why they are included and then presenting them in a more action-oriented way, such as a SMART format (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely).

The review team heard further clarification on the cross-referencing of recommendations during the review week, together with how they are being progressed through a 12-Point SER Implementation Plan that has recently been developed.

The SER includes a short conclusion chapter, and appendices that provide links to a range of on-line documents, a summary of second providers and other partnerships, a list of awarding bodies, a summary of good practice identified by External Authenticators (EAs), and the Terms of Reference (TORs) for various committees and working groups.

The review team is satisfied that the SER and the associated Provider Profile provide a foundation for the further development of institutional QA at KCETB, alongside external assessments. This would support the opportunity to proactively embed an annual QA planning and review cycle to drive improvement and support the achievement of corporate objectives. Further enhancements would be supported by positively considering the observations highlighted in this section, along with other specific commentary and the recommendations/commendations in the remainder of this report.

Section

3

Quality Assurance &
Enhancement

Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

ETB Mission & Strategy

As referenced in the *Introduction and Context* section of this report, and as part of its Statement of Strategy (2017-2021), KCETB has statements of Vision and Mission (which have an associated four Core Values), and three Strategic Goals (which have associated Objectives). These are also articulated in the SER as part of this inaugural review process.

The Core Values as set out in the SER are included in Section 1 of this report.

The review heard during the review visit that KCETB was in the process of finalising a new Statement of Strategy for 2022-2026.The statement had been developed using a consultative process which involved various stakeholders including learners (via student councils and learner fora), staff of KCETB (administrative, teaching and support staff), representatives from industry and employers, and centre management. This document was shared with the team as a full final draft.

This document outlined the same but shortened Vision and Mission Statements, and similar but amended Core Values that focus on:

- Valuing learning

- Aiming for excellence

- Building relationships

- Promoting openness

- Enhancing community

KCETB has previously undertaken institution-wide quality self-assessment in 2018, in response to QQI requirements. The resulting Executive SER included a detailed Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

and was followed up by associated Quality Improvement Plans in 2019 and 2020. The review team finds that these documents, along with the inaugural review SER do not explicitly cross reference identified quality improvement priorities to mission and strategy. However, it is clear throughout these documents that the ambition and priorities specified in the mission and strategy, particularly the overriding focus on learners, communities and their respective needs, is well understood and embedded in the culture of KCETB.

The strategic alignment with, and primacy of purpose in putting learners at the heart of all KCETB's work was strongly in evidence at meetings with a wide range of stakeholders during the review visit. The review team heard that there was a consistent focus on learners from teaching staff and managers in areas including, Career Guidance, learner support and in providing technical support in response to the challenges of Covid-19

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for ensuring that the delivery and realisation of its Mission, Vision, Core Values and Strategic Goals are strongly reflected and communicated across all its operations.

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

KCETB has established a clear governance structure for FET QA from centres and colleges up to the level of the Chief Executive. The establishment and evolution of the Quality Assurance and Oversight Committee (QAOC) is key in this regard, with this committee and its various sub-committees (working groups) having a well-defined and understood terms of reference and linking clearly to senior FET and centre and college operations.

This is illustrated in the following diagram, which is an extract from the SER:
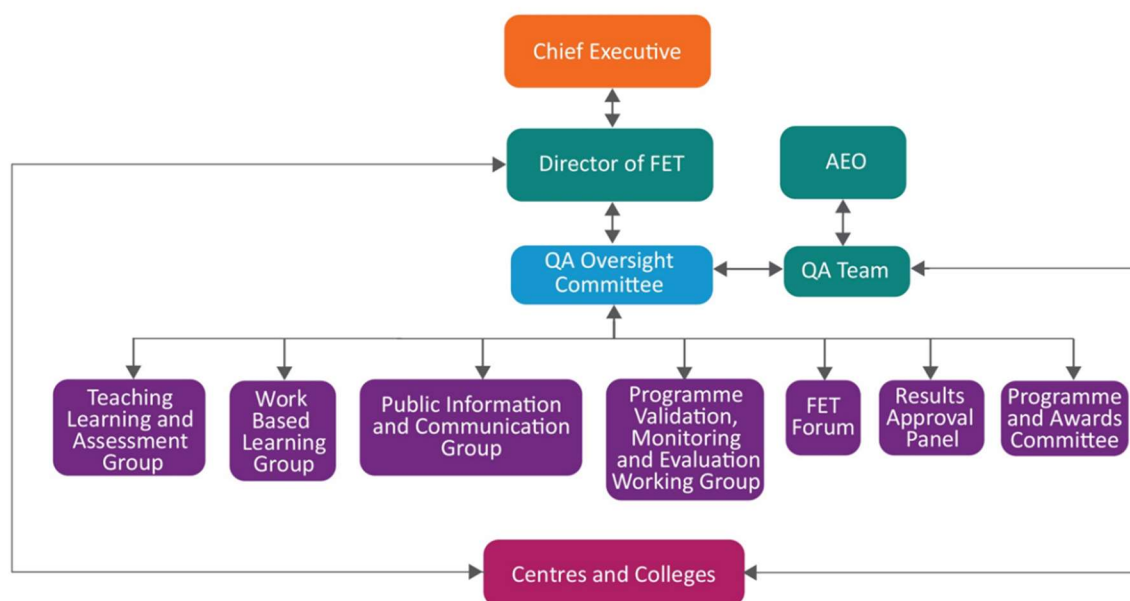
Figure 15 Governance Structure for QA and Associated Subgroups

Membership of the QAOC has evolved since its creation in 2018. A member of the KCETB Board member has been on the committee since 2019. The committee is chaired by the Director of FET, and the Chief Executive is a member with representatives from FET senior management.

The QAOC formed the Inaugural Review Steering Group (IRSG), and delegated responsibility for the self-evaluation process and the completion of the SER for its endorsement.

The QAOC meets regularly and receives updates from its seven Working Groups. The number and work of these groups have developed and currently focus on:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA)
- Work Based Learning (WBL)
- Public Information and Communications
- Programme Validation, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Results Approval (Panel)
- Programmes and Awards
- FET Forum.

A QA Team was established in 2016, with the appointment of a QA Officer. The QA Team has developed and grown since this time. The team, which plays an active role in terms of the day-to-day oversight and management of QA, is now substantially led by an Adult Education Officer (AEO) who also has other responsibilities in addition to QA. This AEO, who was also the designated ETB Review Co-ordinator, engaged diligently and enthusiastically with the review team throughout the process.

KCETB's self-evaluation report recommends in relation to the structure and Terms of Reference for the governance and management of quality assurance that:

1. While there is good evidence of an awareness of the QA governance structure among existing staff, this needs to be further strengthened and a common induction programme developed for new staff to ensure awareness and consistency of approach among all staff.
2. A common Learner Induction Programme will be developed to support learners to understand how assessment is quality assured and governed.
3. The function and membership of the working groups will to be reviewed periodically to ensure appropriate membership and alignment with the priorities for QA.

The review team concurs with these recommendations by KCETB, and particularly strongly with numbers 1 and 3. This is reflected in the review team's recommendations that follow below.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for the approach it has taken to the self-evaluation process and, in particular, the way that it has engaged and consulted with stakeholders during the Covid-19 period. It is clear that KCETB is committed to capturing the voice of all stakeholders in order to provide a high-quality service to the South East region.

- The review team also commends KCETB for the work that it has done to date in formalising the structures to underpin the governance and management of quality assurance and to provide a platform for continuous review and further improvement

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that KCETB review its approach to specifying and cross-referencing recommendations within the inaugural review SER and associated institutional documentation, in order to improve clarity and accountability.

- Alongside its own recommendations in relation to governance and management of QA, the review team recommends that KCETB considers:

  - Opportunities to involve the Board more fully in self-evaluation and the monitoring of quality improvement plans and other FET performance indicators.
  - Group membership (including the ISRG if it is maintained), to involve other relevant stakeholders.
  - Opportunities to increase external representatives on QA committees (QAOC and PAC) to ensure impartiality.
  - The function of the various working groups, to avoid any potential unnecessary and potentially confusing duplication of QA activities.
  - The structure and roles of the QA Team, to ensure that it has the necessary capacity and capability.

Documentation of Quality Assurance

KCETB provided extensive documentation in support of the inaugural review. The SER was comprehensive and additional documentation provided as requested showed coverage of required policies and procedures.

The review team received documents either directly from KCETB or located them online on three key websites, as referenced from within the SER or in answer to queries; http://kilkennycarlow.etb.ie/, https://kcetbqa.ie/, and https://pdandtelkcetb.ie/.

QA documentation around policies and procedures referenced assessment, data protection, records retention, records management, a learner management information system, blended learning, KCETB's Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Action Plan, the apprenticeship Code of Practice, Results Approval Panel (RAP) procedures. The review team also reviewed templated contracts for provision of contracted training.

Public-facing online materials include information on course content and entry requirements, assessment, authentication, programme design, and access, transfer and progression.

Staff-facing online materials available through KCETB's professional development portal, https://pdandtelkcetb.ie/, include additional information on specific Covid-19 related procedures to be adopted.

KCETB have published a number of key policies and at the time of review, others were in the process of being finalised. During the review week, the review team heard that there is a recognition on the part of KCETB of the need to keep policies under review and to provide mechanisms for staff to engage in the process of policy and procedure reviews.

The documentation of quality assurance is managed by the dedicated QA Team. QA Policies have been developed through working groups involving centre staff and learners, and then approved by the Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC).

The 5-stage Policy Development Process outlined in the SER and described during the review visit indicates a robust approach to gathering feedback from stakeholders. During the review visit, stakeholders consistently confirmed to the review team how positive and engaging this process has been.

During their review sessions, KCETB staff talked about how the cross-collaboration around the development of QA documentation has led to a better understanding of QA as an organisational culture shift and something "live" that requires ongoing engagement between staff and learners.

The SER provided details on three policies which were published in 2020: Assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Blended Learning.

The review team finds that the Assessment Policy particularly provides an exemplar of how close collaboration not only has led to the creation of a useful guide for staff, but also how this process engenders excellent buy-in from all staff. This policy is seen by many staff as providing a template for the Teaching and Learning Policy, due for completion in September 2022.

In discussions with teaching staff during the review visit, it became clear to the team that there is need for additional support around teaching and learning in an online environment and around Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, and accessibility standards such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, which seem unevenly if not at all understood.

The review team heard that KCETB is in the process of developing a QA Handbook which will include reference to all QA Policies and Procedures. This handbook is due for completion by September 2023. KCETB have developed a QA Portal as an effective way of engaging staff around QA and disseminating information on policies as they are developed.

While the volume and breadth of QA documentation is impressive, the review team suggest that there remains work to be done on communicating policy and procedure information to learners, particularly around the area of assessment and appeals. QA documentation is comprehensive but not easily accessible to those outside KCETB. The review team suggests that there is also work to be done in terms of making QA documentation more easily accessible to external stakeholders.

In addition, several of the policy documents reviewed seemed adopted from standardised templates, including one online policy on records management which had the name of another ETB in its title. In some aspects of the administration of QA, it seemed to the review team that KCETB have adopted comprehensive and appropriate policies, but these remain in the process of being operationalised through the dedication of staff to certain roles and the hiring of suitably qualified additional staff.

Given the enormous shift to online learning during the pandemic, the review team was impressed with the response by staff and learners and their willingness to develop new ways of learning and working online. KCETB's Blended Learning Policy and TEL Action Plan are welcome additions to addressing the current teaching and learning environment.

The review team finds that the TEL Action Plan provides a good approach to translating policy and procedures into tangible practices. It contains many useful elements such as Digital Leaders, templates and Communities of Practice. However, in discussions during the review week, it became clear that this is an area in its early stages of development and KCETB has struggled to maintain a TEL Co-ordinator role to oversee the implementation of policy. It is unclear if it is possible to align KCETB's practices to national QQI guidelines on blended learning, published in April 2016, as the review team heard the ETB believes that there is no agreed definition of blended learning. However,

KCETB has stated the intention to update the Blended Learning Policy in line with agreed national QQI guidelines when they have been updated and published.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for the 5-stage Policy Development process and the oversight of the QAOC provide an excellent approach to the ongoing development and revision of QA Policies and Procedures and the review team was impressed by the buy-in of so many staff across a wide range of centres and levels to making QA a live process. The QA portal is an ideal platform to use to disseminate information to staff.

- The review team commends KCETB for the way that its staff have embraced the move to online learning creatively and are keen to develop new skills in support of learning, in the absence of comprehensive documentation around Blended Learning.

Recommendations:

- The new Statement of Strategy (2022-2026) is strongly aligned with the outcomes of self-assessment, including the outcomes of the inaugural review. The review team also recommends that KCETB's self-evaluation action planning is cross referenced to its mission and strategy.

- The Teaching and Learning policy is concluded and communicated to all stakeholders as soon as possible.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Staff recruitment and management are governed by national legislation and agreements including but not limited to the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015) and the Disability Act (2005). The KCETB's ongoing work in respect of QA includes the creation of a QA Handbook which will include a section on staff recruitment, management and development.

The review team heard during the review visits that KCETB has a recruitment and selection process and a recruitment pack which includes a Vacancy Notice, Job Description, Person Specification, Application Form, and Information Document for all vacancies. Posts are sanctioned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and SOLAS. Relevant competencies are identified by senior managers, in consultation with Human Resources (HR) and matched to the skills required for the sanctioned post. Approved posts are advertised on the Vacancies Section of the KCETB website, on other websites (e.g., Publicjobs.ie) and in regional/ national press as appropriate.

Training is provided to Selection Board Members and guidelines are provided in respect of the recruitment procedures. As part of the Shortlisting and Selection Process, board members are required to complete Conflict of Interest forms and sign and confirm shortlisting and selection board results.

The review team heard that a transparent and consistent shortlisting process is conducted by the relevant senior managers in consultation with HR. Consideration is given to the essential criteria on the person specification, including qualifications and work experience commensurate with the requirements of the post. Selection board members are chosen in accordance with circular requirements and in accordance with their expertise. Recruitment and selection checks are conducted by HR before an appointment is made.

The SER identifies the need for the development of an induction programme for new staff around governance, policies and processes to ensure a continued consistency in message and the review team agrees with this recommendation to ensure awareness and consistency of approach among all staff.

In order to meet KCETB's strategic goal of ensuring that their education and training services meet high quality standards, recruitment of adequate and appropriate staffing (including in specialist areas) is imperative. During the main review visit, the review team heard that KCETB has experienced challenges recruiting to fill roles. One such role is the currently vacant PD & TEL Coordinator role.

In terms of management structures, the Director of FET has responsibility for 21 separate programmes and a number of associated services across Kilkenny and Carlow. The FET Senior Management Team (SMT) comprises of three AEOs, the Training Services Manager, Assistant Training Services Manager and a FET Principal and a FET Deputy Principal. Each of the AEOs has

responsibility for specific overarching areas as well as a number of programmes within FET. The Training Services Manager supported by the Assistant Manager has responsibility for all training provision across the two counties. The SER states that there is a clear reporting structure in place, with the SMT meeting with the Director of FET bi-monthly. Monthly meetings are held with coordinators to ensure oversight and support for staff across all provision.

The review team heard during the review visits that there is not currently a KCETB wide policy governing formal staff appraisal process, nor is there a teaching/training observation process for teaching staff or instructors. The review team recognises that this is a national area for development but is also of the opinion that a formal system of staff appraisal is necessary in order to support professional development and sectoral/institutional performance and standards. The review team heard evidence of some emerging peer observation of teaching at centres and with second providers which is a positive step.

The KCETB website is the first point of contact for staff with reference to HR policies. Work has been done by the QA Team to create and disseminate QA newsletters (the first edition was in March 2020) to provide a medium for sharing collaborative work across KCETB. In addition, the development of the QA portal where internal communication and centre specific information is housed, and the development of the QA website, has meant there are clear channels of communication for staff with reference to QA policies which have been developed to date.

Professional standards are maintained and enhanced through KCETB's commitment to staff continuous professional development (CPD). During the review visit, the review team received the impression that KCETB staff are generally very positive and enthusiastic and are aware that they can access professional development materials and opportunities.

KCETB has a Staff Training and Development Policy that sets out its stated commitment to promoting and encouraging the personal and professional development of all its employees. Pursuant to this policy, all members of staff are eligible to apply for support and funding in respect of their desired course of study and training.

The SER provides examples of professional development opportunities taken up by staff including Level 6, 7 and 8 qualifications in Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), Level 8 qualifications in Change Management and a Level 9 qualification in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the

review team heard from staff and management that these opportunities had been positively received by staff.

The appointment of a PD & TEL Coordinator in KCETB is identified in the SER as a positive step towards the oversight and co-ordination of specialised training and a centralised approach to staff training. The PD & TEL Coordinator post was created in January 2020 and the initial focus of the post holder was to provide training and support to staff on the use of Office 365 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this position is currently vacant and KCETB is actively seeking to recruit to this role. (The previous incumbent is providing cover.)

The SER states that the development of the PD Portal in 2020 further enhanced the range and accessibility of PD opportunities available to staff and further states that in 2020 a total of 90 training events were organised centrally through this portal. However, there does not appear to have been any formal documenting of needs analysis nor is there a professional development strategy, so it is not clear to what extent the current CPD initiatives have created opportunities to support the KCETB's strategic goal in relation to staff development.

The SER states that some formal communities of practice were established in 2020 in the vocational areas of Childcare and Healthcare. During the review visit, KCETB staff spoke positively of informal communities of practice that have formed or are in the process of forming as QA processes are developed.

Recruitment to the post of TEL / PD Co-ordinator to proactively drive CPD will be important, however there is no reference in the Staff Training and Development Policy to the involvement of the TEL / PD Coordinator. This is addressed in the recommendations below.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for its creation of the post of PD & TEL Coordinator as well as the work done to date establishing the QA Portal and QA Newsletter for staff. The review team also commends the TEL / PD Co-ordinator who was in post in 2020 for the timely roll out of IT training in response to Covid-19.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that KCETB conduct a CPD needs analysis across centres. The output of this would feed into the creation of a Professional Development Strategy to support KCETB's progress towards achieving its strategic goals. The review team recommends that consideration be given to establishing a formal structure operating through centre managers to ensure that the development needs of each centre as well as the collective needs of KCETB can be taken into and addressed in a CPD strategy. Related to the CPD strategy, the review team recommends KCETB develop an induction programme for new staff around governance, policies and processes to ensure a continued consistency in message.

- The review team recommends that KCETB fill the currently vacant TEL Co-ordinator (or equivalent) position with a suitably qualified and experienced professional with a background in teaching and learning using technology.

- The review team recommends that formal communities of practice are created to support staff development and sharing of best practice. Community of practice networks could be established for staff teaching in specific areas as well as in subject-specific areas in addition to any existing communities of practice already established.

- The review team recommends the creation of a consistent KCETB wide policy governing the formal staff appraisal process. KCETB may wish to consider introducing an appropriate model of teaching observation to support staff appraisal and development and the realisation of institutional strategic objectives.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

The review team received the impression from discussions with staff at all levels during the review visit, that KCETB is dedicated to ensuring a consistently high standard across its FET provision and that the programme development, approval and submission for validation process is an important element in progress towards this aim.
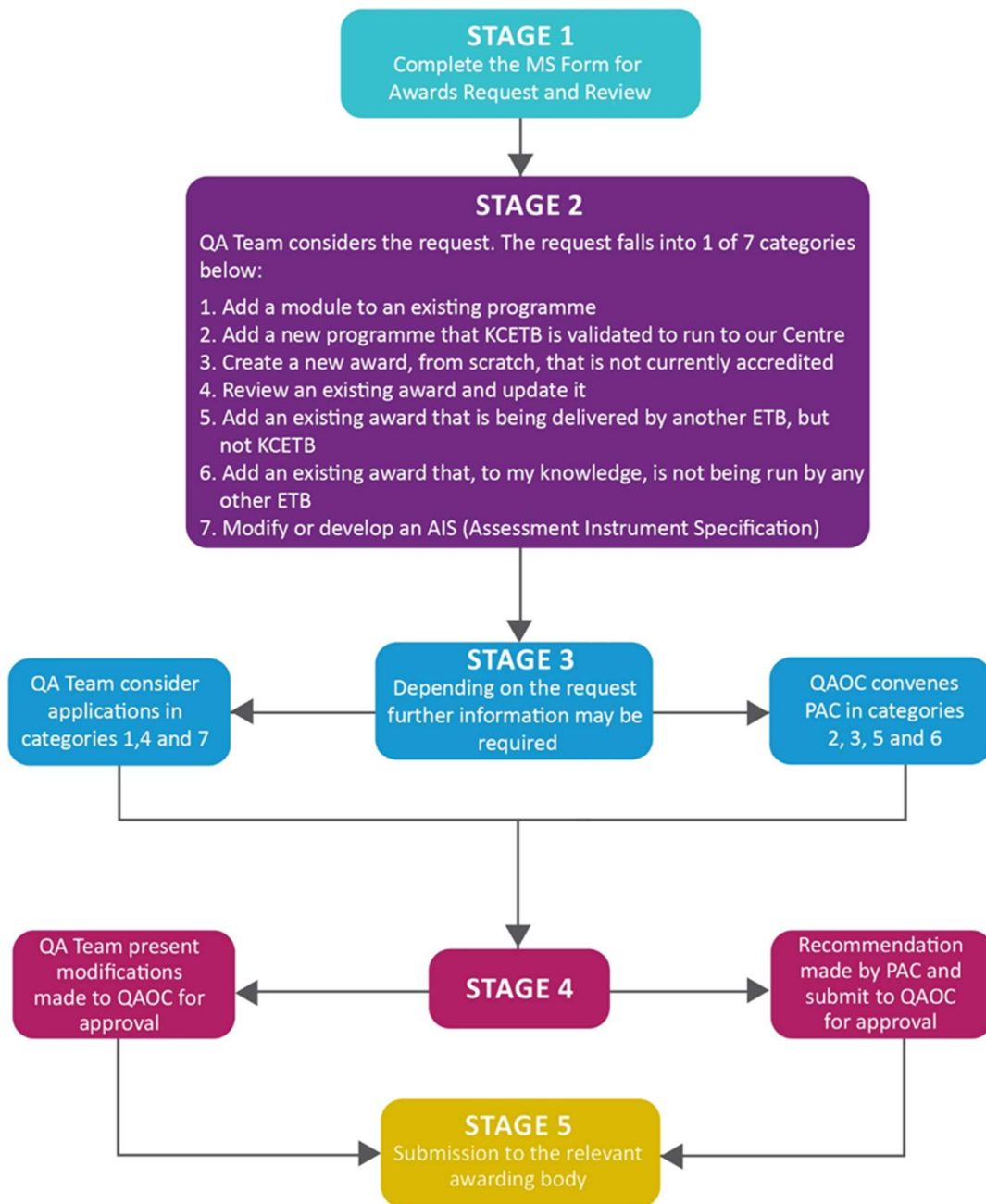
KCETB's programme development approval and submission for validation process is outlined in the SER. All FET Principals, Centre Managers and Service Managers who wish to offer a new programme for the first time must seek approval through this process. The Quality Assurance Oversight Committee (QAOC) has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that programmes are developed in accordance with the QQI Core Guidelines and Topic Specific Guidelines before submission for validation. The QAOC is responsible for the oversight of the design, development, approval, monitoring, and review of all programmes while responsibility for the development of policy, review and monitoring is delegated to the Programme Validation, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (PVME).

The PVME was established in November 2020 in order to create an additional layer of oversight. The review team finds that this is good practice as it ensures delineation of roles and responsibilities. As an extension of the PVME, a Programme and Awards Committee (PAC) was established in April 2021. This sub-group assesses and recommends programmes for validation by the QAOC.

The PAC is chaired by the Director of FET with members of the QA Team represented. Relevant internal and external members participate as required depending on the programme submitted for approval.

The review team heard that programme development is a key area for all ETBs and QQI introduced "Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training" in 2016. These policies adopted a broader approach to the specification standards for new awards. Pursuant to these policies, providers must demonstrate how proposed programmes would meet a range of criteria including teaching and learning, a well-structured curriculum which is fit for purpose, sufficient qualified staff and physical resources.

The review team finds the programme approval process developed by the PAC in KCETB is an excellent example of a cohesive approach to programme development and in keeping with the QQI policies and criteria for the validation of programmes. It outlines the stages involved from 1 to 5 in a clear process map.

STAGE 1
Complete the MS Form for Awards Request and Review

STAGE 2
QA Team considers the request. The request falls into 1 of 7 categories below:

1. Add a module to an existing programme
2. Add a new programme that KCETB is validated to run to our Centre
3. Create a new award, from scratch, that is not currently accredited
4. Review an existing award and update it
5. Add an existing award that is being delivered by another ETB, but not KCETB
6. Add an existing award that, to my knowledge, is not being run by any other ETB
7. Modify or develop an AIS (Assessment Instrument Specification)

STAGE 3
Depending on the request further information may be required

QA Team consider applications in categories 1,4 and 7

QAOC convenes PAC in categories 2, 3, 5 and 6

STAGE 4

QA Team present modifications made to QAOC for approval

Recommendation made by PAC and submit to QAOC for approval

STAGE 5
Submission to the relevant awarding body

The initial proposal for a new programme must be submitted on a Programme Request Form accompanied by a scoping document. The scoping document must outline the rationale for such a programme or award. All proposals must take cognisance of local and regional economic trends and the impact such a programme will have. It must be clearly stated who the proposed learners will be and the level and substantive requirements in relation to resources and staffing etc. All programme requests must indicate that they are in line with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and

associated policies and procedures in relation to Access Transfer and Progression, Assessment and Work-placement. This process must be followed if an additional module is required by a centre or if a centre wishes to offer an award that exits in another ETB but not already in KCETB.

Once a request is received it moves to stage 2 where it is categorised under 1 to 6 from adding a new module to an existing award to creating a new programme. The QA Team must at this stage ensure the programme is in line with KCETB's strategic goals and have a sound basis for development.

With any relevant modifications identified and addressed, the programme moves to stage 4 for approval by QAOC. If approved, it is then submitted to QQI (or other relevant awarding body) for validation.

During the review visit, KCETB staff, particularly Centre Heads, were complimentary of the work carried out by the PAC in creating this 5-stage approach as it ensured all staff were clear in their approach to programme development as well as accessing additional modules and awards. The review team sees this process as a positive development in creating a consistent approach to programme development.

The review team considers KCETB's experience of programme development and validation to be limited at this time. However, during the review visit the review team heard some examples of programmes developed under these new policies including the Lowland Leader and Stand Up Paddle Boarding Instructional Skills Level 5 Special Purpose Awards. These awards were developed in partnership with Mountaineering Ireland and Canoeing Ireland and extensive consultation took place with both the National Governing Bodies and relevant subject matter experts which is to be welcomed. The review team views partnerships such as these ensure the standard and relevance of awards. These awards are now available to other ETBs upon request, which is a positive development both for KCETB and the outdoor recreation and tourism industry.

The review team heard of other examples of a collaborative approach to programme development, including:

- Collaboration with Kildare and Wicklow ETB (KWETB) for the Fifty Shades Greener programme
- Collaboration with Waterford and Wexford ETB (WWETB) and Tipperary ETB on a Skills to Advance initiative (namely Step up and Grow)

- Development of a Skills to Advance Engineering Traineeship with South East Regional Skills Forum, KCETB, WWETB and Tipperary ETB
- Collaboration with Carlow IT in the development of a Level 6 Software Traineeship
- Provision of subject matter expertise to the development of the new award in Advanced Certificate in Early Learning Care led by Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB)

One programme which was developed to meet the needs of industry in the South East is the Level 6 M4857 Management Award. Staff from KCETB expressed recognition that greater collaboration with industry would ensure the development of key programmes at all levels across various sectors. In the view of the review team, in-house planning and the development of the work-based learning working group should support this as sharing of knowledge particularly around employer needs would greatly enhance provision and the development of new awards. This is indicated in tasks outlined in 7.3 and 7.4 of the SER.

The review team is of the opinion that all collaborations add to the skill-set of staff engaged in programme development and build on the expertise and experience of the teams involved to future proof in-house capacity.

The review team heard that several KCETB staff members have completed the Level 9 Postgraduate Certificate in Programme Design and Validation in Further Education and Training from Maynooth University and other staff members have expressed an interest in participating in same. The team agrees that this would be of enormous benefit to KCETB and ties in with the SOLAS ETBI Professional Development Strategy.

KCETB is represented on the South East Regional Skills Forum (SERSF) and has regular contact with the Regional Skills Manager regarding economic trends and programme requirements in the region. For example, during the review visit the review team heard about instances in which KCETB's liaison with industry identified requirements for relevant awards. The bus and coach travel sector was one such example where the industry had specific requirements and approached KCETB to deliver training in partnership with them. The Bus and Coach Association and The Irish Road Haulage were very complimentary of their engagement with KCETB and KCETB's proactive approach in working to address skills gaps in the region. Both organisations are currently involved in feeding into the design and review of programmes in collaboration with KCETB to ensure relevance and suitability.

In the SER, KCETB outlines their key industries as Agriculture, IT, Retail and Finance and identifies the South East region as the 6th fastest growing in Europe in terms of job creation. Covid-19 has impacted upon the region and, as it recovers, the FET Service has strategically aligned its provision to work with those most affected to ensure they are afforded opportunities to upskill and reskill.

The South East region has a growing financial services sector that requires a qualified workforce. The review team considers that KCETB could address this need by delivering a range of financial and IT traineeships and apprenticeships. KCETB is not currently a coordinating provider of a national apprenticeship however there may be scope to develop and lead an apprenticeship in such a growing area. Over 198 companies had engaged in an employer survey with KCETB and employer industry representatives expressed to the review team during the review week that they would be open to engaging in communities of practice and various panels to inform programme development and curricular design if opportunities to do so were available to them. This was also evident from meetings with industry representatives during the review visit.

As the economy recovers post Covid-19, the review team believes it is important for KCETB to continue to review their programmes and align their provision with upcoming employment opportunities in the region. The Employer Engagement team are pro-active in connecting with industry and are currently delivering Skills to Advance and Skills to Compete programmes. However, the review team heard during the review visit that having short sharp tailored programmes available to their companies in a timely manner is a national priority and not only a KCETB issue. Having a clear step by step approach in place for programme development approval and validation will support such developments.

The review team recognises that the development of digital badges and micro-qualifications is an area requiring further exploration by KCETB and this will require key staff being available to input into the academic requirements while partnering with industry subject matter experts to ensure a cohesive collaboration. This collaboration will be in line with KCETB's strategic goals and themes of Teaching and Learning, Quality Services and External Partnerships and Linkages. It was evident to the review team that KCETB aims to be the provider of choice in the South East region and external agencies and employers who attended the review meetings communicated their willingness to work closely with KCETB to address programme deficits. The team thinks that KCETB needs to grasp the opportunities for collaboration with industry that exist in the region.

During the review visit, the Heads of Centres indicated the importance of internal centre reviews to ensure programmes achieve the objectives set for them and that they are in line both with learner

needs and the changing needs of society as outlined in the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The review team is of the opinion that engaging teams in programme development and supporting the embedding of CPD in all aspects of curricular design will ensure KCETB can respond effectively to external demands.

The review team heard that KCETB is aware that the development of a new programme puts considerable pressure on resources and staffing and are moving towards Communities of Practice where expertise and experience of programme writing can be harnessed. They are also actively considering facilitating the membership of industry experts onto various working groups and committees with a view to developing new initiatives. It is a work in progress but moving in the right direction. The review team believes that it is essential that industry experts are enabled to participate in working groups and have a voice at all levels of programme development and review.

As part of the review process, employers communicated their belief that the main challenge for ETBs, KCETB included, is to showcase what can be offered in the region to both learners and industry and that programme relevancy is central to its success.

Commendations:

- The review team recommends the development of a 5-stage programme approval process. The review team also commends KCETB for setting priorities and focusing in particular on Programme and Awards Approval Policy, QA Information Process & Communication, Assessment and the production of a QA Handbook.

Recommendations:

- KCETB continues to build upon its collaborative approach to developing programmes and awards with industry. The review team agrees with the requirement (identified in the SER) to work closely with employers with a view to developing leading programmes for industry. This will require a practice of horizon scanning to see what opportunities exist for collaboration with industry and to ensure programmes align with upcoming employment opportunities within the region. One such opportunity is the potential for development of Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Micro-qualifications/Digital Badging.

Access, Transfer and Progression

During the review visit, the review team heard that pathways to access FET at KCETB are well documented and there appears to be a clear understanding of how potential learners access services. Guidance Councillors, Community Groups and referral by friends and family play a big role in the initial access. The QA website, along with the QA newsletter and QA Learner Newsletter all assist in developing the quality and consistency of Access, Transfer and Progression.

Access is advertised locally through various channels. The review team considers the production of a printed course directory as a welcome acknowledgement that not all learners reside in the digital space.

The review team finds that virtual open days are an innovative development in the provision of access information and have been particularly beneficial during the period affected by Covid-19.

The review team understands that KCETB's current website is being redeveloped. The review team believes that this redevelopment process will provide KCETB with an opportunity to present a more modern and accessible format for learners (and other stakeholders) to access key information.

The current website is functional but is not as accessible as it could be for a learner user. For example, flyers for courses provided on the website are informative but are written in the vernacular of the education system which is not always comprehensible to learners. While it is acknowledged by the review team that these flyers are important, an opportunity to design alternative flyers from a learner perspective should also be considered. A simpler format of flyer and language could serve to more effectively engage with learners and encourage them to access the application process.

During the review visit, the review team heard from learners (past and present) and KCETB staff members about the learner induction process. Learner induction was available in a number of programmes. All learners interviewed during the review visit had received a briefing of their course and overview of expected outcomes. Learners were complimentary of the interaction with their tutors. Trust in teaching staff was very evident to the review team and although some learners interviewed were not aware of appeals processes etc, they voiced confidence that the teaching staff would support them by providing any information they required regarding access, transfer and progression.

The Results Approval Panel (RAP) is a critical mechanism for reviewing the progression of learners. The review team thinks it would be useful to include information on progression of learners when the RAP reports are submitted. It is acknowledged that progression in many cases may be the attainment of personal goals and succeeding in attaining employment due to the diversity of learner and training offered.

At the time of review, KCETB's website stated that the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy is currently in development. However, the review team notes that there is a RPL Policy published in the Policies area. The review team suggests an edit of the website is required to clarify the situation and remove confusion.

During the review visit, there was evidence of a number of learners having benefitted from RPL, but the review team heard of one case involving a member of the defence forces where it appeared there had been a lost opportunity for RPL recognition. The learner had a great deal of experience in logistics and had received training within the Military College. Since his military training was unaccredited, this element was left unexplored prior to commencement of the learner's course and the learner was unaware that there might have been an opportunity to benefit from RPL.

It is acknowledged by the review ream that RPL is a developing process within FET. Its importance is increasing with the changing economy and the review team believes that the application of RPL principles is critical for the success of access and progression through FET.

At the time for the review visit, there had been a hiatus in face-to-face collaborative access and transition promotion events dur to Covid-19. The review team considers that there will also be opportunities for KCETB with the development of the Technological University for the South East (TUSE).

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends KCETB review their current implementation of the RPL Policy to ensure it is being applied consistently cross centres and programmes and to develop a formal community of practice around RPL. It might be helpful to compile and disseminate RPL studies to assist both the learner and teaching staff in understanding and applying RPL within FET.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

The review team finds that the Assessment Flow Chart in the SER provides a clear picture of how KCETB approaches the integrity and approval of assessment results.
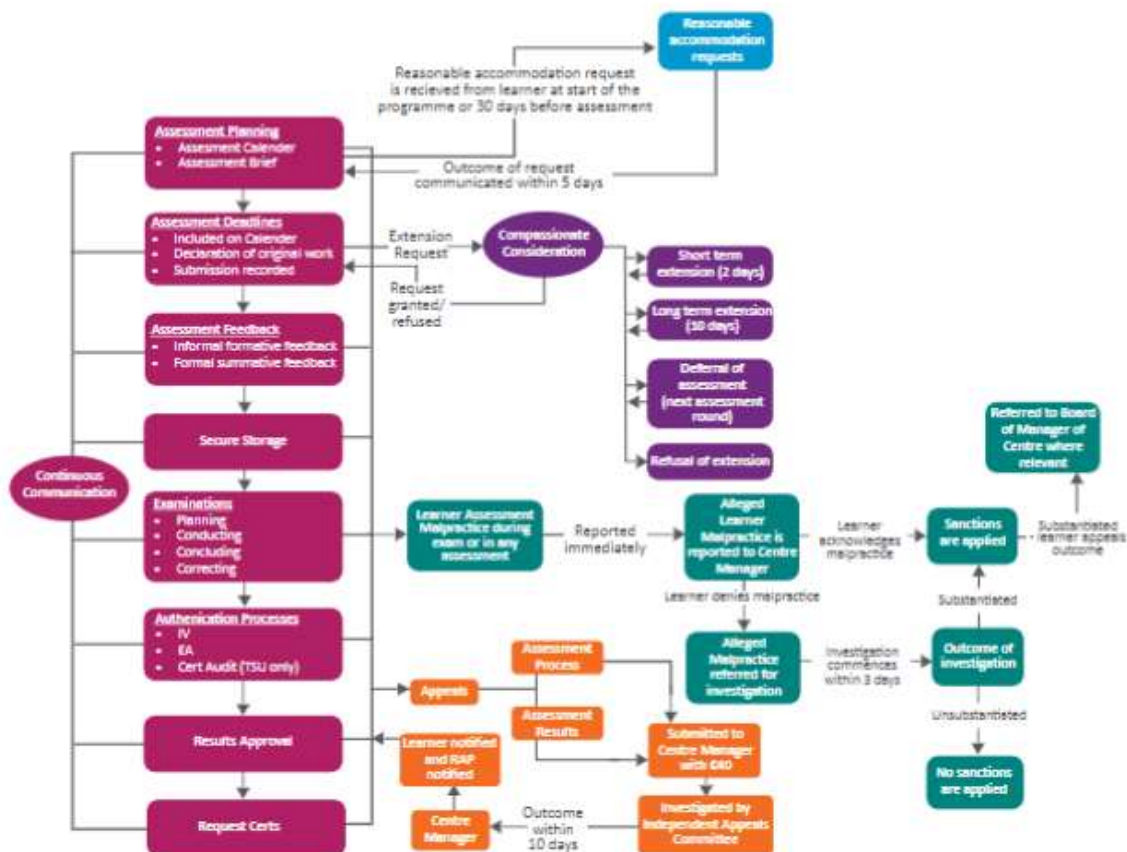

Figure 50 Assessment Flow Chart

During discussions with stakeholders around the development of KCETB's Assessment Policy throughout the review visit, it was clear to the review team that staff were very familiar with the processes involved and were afforded the space to reflect on aspects which needed reconsideration. For example, the development of the Assessment Policy allowed staff the space to realise that the role of Internal Assessor should be removed from the Internal Verification process.

During the review visit, the review team met several learners who were unaware of their rights with regard to results appeals. The team felt this may be down to the vocabulary used around assessment

rather than learners not having the information and learners were able to articulate how they might go about finding out about the appeals process.

The review team do not doubt the strength of the assessment processes in terms of affording learners the opportunity to demonstrate their learning, that results are verified and authenticated, and that consistent standards of assessment are applied across centres.

However, the review team consider that the move to online learning has given rise to a range of local practices which do not seem to be documented at a senior level. Prior to Covid-19, the provision of lockable boxes and clear guidelines on how to manage paper-based submissions was described on several occasions and is recognised by the review team as an example of very good practice.

The review team finds that due to the shift online, practice around the security of learner content has varied across centres with limited central oversight. The review team were unable to determine where all content is stored online. KCETB supplied laptops are encrypted but it was unclear from discussions during the review visit whether all machines used for processing data across all centres are encrypted, for example, where mobile devices are in use. There were situations where data was being duplicated between local and central systems and there seems to be no centralised audit or documentation of who has access to what content.

The review team is of the opinion that there was an uneven application of processes for checking for plagiarism. Those learners submitting through Moodle in some centres had their submissions passed through plagiarism detection software, but this is not uniformly applied, nor was there any indication of training around what to do if such software presented "similarity" scoring. Section 9.2.3.1 of the Assessment Policy addresses the matter of plagiarism but does not provide for practical guidelines on how this the policy can be implemented consistently across KCETB where centres use different software platforms.

On p.129 of the SER, there is a reference to Good Assessment Practice in a virtual learning environment (VLE), which refers to "remotely supervised assessment". When the review team enquired about this during the review visit, one centre explained how they used MS Teams as a remote invigilation platform by using the camera function to view learners opening envelopes containing assessment questions. The team finds that this raises significant questions around privacy and security. Remote invigilation is something which has come under significant scrutiny of late. A

QQI-published report at the end of 2021[1] notes the many aspects of this practice that need careful scrutiny, consideration and clear guidance.

The review team heard that all KCETB staff are required to attend GDPR training and that completion of the final assessment is recorded. Thereafter however, it appears to the review team that it is up to individuals to be responsible for any data they collect and process. There has been no auditing of local practice with regard to compliance with GDPR and wider data protection, privacy and security obligations. Questions from staff regarding GDPR good practice are dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for the assessment processes outlined in the SER and Assessment Policy, which offer a robust and clear route to consistent assessment across the ETB.

- The review also commends KCETB for the way that the Assessment Policy has achieved significant buy-in and for the good awareness of assessment issues across centres involved in the review.

Recommendations:

- The Assessment Policy should be updated to provide clear and practical guidelines around plagiarism detection and actions to be taken so that a consistent approach can be applied across centres. In addition, the review team recommends that KCETB clarify its position with regard to online invigilation in its Blended Learning, Assessment and Data Protection Policies, having regard to QQI publications on this topic. Should KCETB decide to employ online invigilation, clear guidelines and training needs to be provided, with appropriate checks put in place.

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[1] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-12/e-proctoring-in-theory-and-practice-a-review.pdf

Information and Data Management

KCETB is not unique in having to pivot quickly to online learning provision and remote working in March 2020. Pre-Covid-19 systems and procedures within KCETB have required timely adjustment and review to allow KCETB to continue to support learners and staff during the course of nationwide restriction. This has included training all staff and upskilling key staff members with the knowledge and competencies to deliver support.

The review team finds that KCETB has developed robust data security plans, including appropriate redundancy, backup and recovery procedures.

The review team is satisfied that KCETB has done an excellent job in providing hardware and software access to staff and learners under very challenging circumstances and praises KCETB for this. However, this also brings a need for longer term duty of care and diligence around data.

The review team was unclear following meetings with staff during the review visit whether all devices hosting learner data were encrypted. It seems those provided centrally by KCETB are encrypted but the review team learned during meetings that there are many staff using personal devices, including mobile devices, to engage with learners and these do not have the same level of protection.

In terms of understanding KCETB's journey in navigating its data protection obligations around learner information, the review team found it useful to reflect on evaluation and quality improvement documentation provided by the ETB. Data security was listed under item 7.3 of KCETB's Executive Summary of the 2018 Executive Self Evaluation Report. It was then referenced in the 2019 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), where it was noted that GDPR training had taken place and procedures had been reviewed. There is no reference to data protection or security in the 2020 QIP, published at the end of March 2020 when there had been an enforced move to increased levels of online learning. This suggests to the review team that KCETB was not yet aware of the significant impact using a variety of online platforms to capture learner data would have.

Initial consideration of the SER left the review team with a number of questions with regard to data protection which led to requests for additional policies and information in October 2021. The additional documentation was provided but during the review visit, the review team was unable to fully satisfy itself that there was a full and organisational level understanding of data protection obligations.

While there is now a named Data Protection Officer (DPO) role within Organisation Support and Development (OSD) and significant initial GDPR training has taken place, the review team believe the role is insufficiently resourced to keep on top of obligations when so much data is spread across so many systems and centres.

One example of this is where some centres use different mobile apps, including WhatsApp, for staff/learner communication. OSD confirmed during the review visit that they believe this is inappropriate but were not aware of the practice.

The review team understands that, not exclusive to KCETB, the fulfilment of obligations around Data Protection is a key challenge for the Irish FE sector. With sufficient resourcing of the DPO role, the review team thinks it should be possible to continue to engage staff around GDPR obligations instead of relying on personal responsibility after initial training. It would also allow for auditing of practice and provision of good practice guidelines in the area. A dedicated DPO role with sufficient understanding of the complexities of online data gathering and processing and a robust senior level cross department data management working group could be one appropriate means to addressing GDPR and data protection obligations.

In addition, the review team finds there is confusion between OSD and IT over whose responsibility it is to oversee data protection. During separate meetings with OSD and IT staff during the review visit, the review team were unable to fully determine how and where learner data is stored and managed, who has ETB wide oversight of this and how KCETB oversees use of Moodle in the two centres where it is in operation.

The review team is of the view that the main risks with this situation are that there cannot be a systematic approach to the discovery and resolution of data breaches, and it would potentially be very difficult, time-consuming and costly to fulfil certain data access requests. In addition, the implementation of the Records Retention policy is very challenging, particularly where learner data is stored on cloud-based Microsoft systems. Finally, from a programme development perspective, it can also impact on the ability of KCETB to use data optimally to inform decision making.

Data protection aside, the review team were made aware of KCETB using data as part of its programme monitoring and review. This data was sourced from Programme Learner Support System (PLSS), the Funding Allocation Request and Reporting (FARR) system and reviews and surveys with learners, staff and industry, and also including data sourced from authentication processes. KCETB

also referenced many other systems such as Cloudschool, Salespulse and the Adult Guidance Management System, from which data is taken to drive decision making around programme monitoring and review. The review team felt that KCETB are keen to use data whenever possible and for the right reasons, but the variety of systems in operation across the organisation make this a manual process and there is undoubtedly an opportunity to rationalise this through the development of a Learner Management Information System policy as set out in the SER.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for the manner and speed with which it began meeting learners' IT requirements during the pandemic. It was clear that many staff responded in an energetic and productive fashion and have been providing excellent support to learners whenever they present with technical queries. To do this with such a small central IT team was very impressive.

- KCETB's rollout of GDPR training to all staff and the availability of cover to respond to data protection queries is commended by the review team, especially given the variety of other tasks undertaken by OSD.

- The review team commends KCETB for its acknowledgement of the data diversity challenge and commitment to making greater use of data.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that KCETB consider the resourcing of data management across its centres to ensure that an ETB wide data strategy can be implemented, and data related issues can be addressed cross functionally within the ETB. The review team recommends that KCETB consider:
  - Conducting an audit of where learner records are stored (both online and in physical locations) and documentation on who has access to this information should be completed as soon as possible. This should be referenced in the Data Protection, Records Retention and Assessment policies and updated at appropriate regular intervals.

- Developing Standard Operating Procedures for all of their centres and second providers around data protection, to include an audit schedule and consideration of the most effective way to achieve high level oversight of data management between IT and OSD.
- Prioritising the unification of data through an appropriate IT system and policy to provide for a single source of truth to inform decision making.

Public Information and Communication

KCETB's Public Information and Communications committee was formed in 2019 and has focuses on communicating the QA processes and procedures within KCETB to staff and learners. The review team finds that the development of the QA Portal on KCETB's intranet has achieved a consistency of information within the organisation. Policies and forms are readily accessible by staff and the review team heard that this had been positively received by KCETB staff. Videos have been produced which have good production values and the team suggests these should be populated more in social media with appropriate meta tags etc. There has been commendable engagement with the Regional Skills, Chamber of Commerce and other public fora when this has been possible and not limited by Covid-19 restrictions.

The review team believes that the redevelopment of the main ETB website will contribute greatly to the dissemination of QA policies and messaging. The pace of work within QA leads to frequent changes and updates in policy and procedure. The FET team require an ongoing resource to update all channels of communication. The review team finds that many of the reports listed on the current ETB website are out of date. The website must be viewed as an ongoing developing resource that requires constant iteration and redevelopment rather than a project that is updated every few years.

Due to the history of the formation of KCETB, the review team heard from learners and external stakeholders that many people are aware of the training centres and schools individually rather than the KCETB as an overarching brand. The review team heard from KCETB OSD staff that it is difficult to promote a coherent image of KCETB without developing a unified brand strategy. The review team finds that there is an opportunity for KCETB to build upon the reputation of their training centres and schools under a unified brand showcasing their offerings. Such work is likely to require the assistance of professionals with experienced of marketing and branding.

The review team is of the opinion that the Public Information and Communication group will require some additional resources. In particular, there is a need for consistency in messaging and a requirement to utilise social media channels that are applicable to all stakeholders. For example, use of LinkedIn is at a very early stage of adoption and provides KCETB with a rich ground for promoting the good news stories, professionalism of the team and the progressive nature of programmes offered, in addition to supporting recruitment of skilled staff. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are also channels where opportunity resides for KCETB. The review team finds that the committee would benefit from the assistance of a corporate PR professional to assist it in drafting appropriate policy and strategy documents and other relevant documents i.e. a style book for advertisements, announcements and messaging.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for the development of the QA Portal and internal newsletters which were praised by staff during the review visit.

- The review team also commends KCETB for engagement with, and attendance at, public business and skills fora.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that KCETB develop a clear and comprehensive corporate branding strategy and policy to showcase their offerings. To support with public information and communication, the review team recommends that KCETB administer constant updates and resources on the public facing website.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Learning Environment

The review team notes evidence within the SER and from the review visit of the existence of a very supportive learning environment, with learners commenting on the dedication of, and accessibility to, teaching staff and guidance counsellors, as well as other support staff. Learners commented on staff "going above and beyond", including providing assistance with learners with additional needs.

The quality of learning across KCETB's centres and programmes is monitored via a range of formal and informal mechanisms. Formal mechanisms include learner feedback forms, end of year or end of module evaluations and one-to-one meetings with learners. Informal feedback is captured via discussions between learners and teaching staff in class and via exit surveys.

Learner feedback is also obtained via the FET Learner Forum and from Learner Councils in Youthreach in Kilkenny and Carlow, VTOS in Kilkenny and Carlow, as well as Carlow Institute and Ormonde College of Further Education.

In addition to learner feedback, feedback is also obtained from teaching staff via end of course evaluations and reflection forms. Feedback on the quality of learning and the learner experience is reviewed as part of the programme review process.

The review team finds that at present, there is not a consistent KCETB wide approach to monitoring quality of teaching and learning and utilising feedback to improve the learner experience. Indeed, the SER acknowledges that there is not currently a consistent policy or approach across centres to ensure a consistent approach to obtaining learner feedback and utilising this information to ascertain whether modifications to programmes are necessary. The review team encourages the development of appropriate policy and procedures as soon as possible to achieve consistency of approach to monitoring quality of teaching and learning across KCETB.

The review team is conscious that over the course of the last two years that significant change to modes of delivery because of Covid-19 has necessitated an almost overnight move to remote learning.

KCETB has developed a TEL Action Plan which sets out their vision and priorities for the digital learning environment. The TEL Action Plan references centre closures due to Covid-19 during 2020 and 2021 that required a swift move to remote learning. The review team notes with approval KCETB's response to Covid-19. The roll-out of Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment and software platforms demonstrated the organisation's capability to demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness in the face of public health restrictions which prevented on-site provision of programmes. This responsiveness was praised both by learners and staff during the review visit and the review team echoes this praise. For example, Office 365 packages were rolled out to all staff and learners to enable learners to have the opportunity to engage effectively in a remote learning environment. In addition, 432 interactive touch screen laptop devices were purchased and made available on loan to learners.

At the main review visit, the review team heard that, in general, the roll-out of ICT/software platforms during the pandemic had worked well but staff would feel supported by further guidance regarding the preferred online communication system across the service for staff to use in the future (e.g., Zoom/Google Meets) and whether use of certain apps was permitted (e.g., WhatsApp).

The quality of the learning experience on work placements is a considerable component of the monitoring of the learning environment because of the vocational nature of many of KCETB's programmes. As many of the programmes offered are vocational, they require an element of work-based learning in the form of a work placement. The quality of the learning environment during these placements is monitored via:

- Monitoring visits
- Employer / learner packs
- Supervisor reports
- Reports / journals completed by learners

The review team heard that learners are supported by staff in accessing and engaging in their work placement, but the exact nature of this support varies on a centre-by-centre basis. For example, the SER states that some centres have work experience teaching staff while others may have a Work Experience Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing all work placements.

During the review visit, the review team heard from learners that there are various levels of support in terms of identifying and accessing potential work placements. The review team received the impression that there is a wealth of knowledge of work placements with local employers, but this is to

some extent shared on an ad hoc or one-to-one basis with individual learners liaising directly with teaching staff to ask for advice as opposed to being part of a formal process.

These inconsistencies in the approach to work placements and the monitoring of placements is acknowledged in the SER. The SER states that this is being reviewed by the Work Based Learning Group with a view to creating a consistent policy and procedures across KCETB's centres and programmes and the review team agrees that this is an important development that should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In terms of evidence of enhancement in teaching and learning, the SER states that there was a strategic decision taken in 2020 to focus professional development (PD) in the areas of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in order to support staff in moving to remote teaching and learning. The review team heard from staff during the review visit about the training and development opportunities afforded to them to support this transition. The SER also identified the appointment of a PD & TEL Coordinator in 2020 and the development of a PD Portal as positive steps towards the enhancement of teaching and learning. The review team has also seen the Professional Development 2020 Annual Report which is referenced in the SER. However, as stated elsewhere in this report (see *Staff Recruitment, Management and Development)*, there does not appear to have been any needs analysis of PD requirements to support in the enhancement of teaching and learning. The review team believes that, in order to meet KCETB's strategic goal of ensuring that their education and training services meet high quality standards, it will be important that an appropriate needs analysis is conducted, and PD strategy is developed.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB for providing a supportive learning environment. It is clear that current and past learners feel very well supported by their tutors and by other KCETB staff.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that formal arrangements in relation to the monitoring of teaching and learning be standardised across all KCETB centres and services to ensure a consistent approach.

Assessment of Learners

During the review visit the review team heard from staff about the development of the Assessment Policy and the positive impact this has had in terms of ensuring a consistent approach across all centres in the assessment of learners.

KCETB's Assessment Policy was issued in 2020. The SER sets out the background behind the development of the Assessment Policy and, during the review visit, the review team heard details of the development of this policy by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Working Group (in consultation with stakeholders). This report has previously mentioned the process of developing this policy and praised the level of staff buy-in. (See *Integrity and Approval of Learner Results.*)

The Assessment Policy contains common assessment templates and as a result there is consistency with respect to all aspects of assessment including learner briefs, assessment calendars, etc. Assessment is reviewed by management through authentication processes at centre level to ensure it is consistent with national standards and award specifications.

Examinations are drafted by teaching staff and held securely in centres until required. Examination guidelines are issued to learners, and it is the responsibility of teaching staff to follow relevant awarding body guidelines. Examinations are supervised by an impartial invigilator, following which completed examination papers are collected, placed in a specific folder, and then locked in a secure location. (This report has previously identified some concerns around remote invigilation utilising MS Teams. These concerns are not repeated here. See *Integrity and Approval of Learner Results.*)

The SER states that learners are informed about assessments throughout their programmes and that they are provided a clear understanding of the programme content, and the assessment criteria and processes. During the main review visit the review team noted that not all learners understood assessment process or, for example, processes for appealing results although the learners reported that in the first instance, they would feel confident in clarifying these matters with their teaching staff. The creation of more accessible information in plain English is one possible way of deepening learner understanding of assessment processes.

The SER states that currently some centres provide learners with both a learner handbook and an examination handbook outlining the assessment process. This is not yet consistent across centres. The Public Information and Communication Group have developed a template for a Learner

Handbook, and this will be developed along with the Learner Support Portal. The review team is of the opinion that achieving consistency in terms of the information provided to learners around assessment processes is of the utmost importance and should be acted upon as soon as possible.

KCETB issued a Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in November 2020. However, RPL does not appear to be consistently applied across centres and as previously described, the review team heard examples when RPL had not been considered (see *Access, Transfer and Progression*). The review team reiterates its previous comments regarding review of the implementation of the RPL Policy and development of a formal RPL community of practice to ensure consistency in application.

Assessment of learners on work placements is managed at centre and service level in the same way as all other modules. The review team understands that the most common arrangement is that learners find their own work placement and the placement is then approved and monitored by the relevant teaching staff.

The Assessment Policy also applies to the standard of assessment of work based learning. The review team heard that throughout placements there is ongoing communication maintained between the learner, the employer and the centre, with site visits taking place in some instances. During work placements, the employer is required to complete a supervisor's report form where they award marks to the learner for their performance on the work placement. This is taken by KCETB as a valid measure of their performance. The teaching staff consider this report in conjunction with the learner's performance in class and the learner's feedback to arrive at an overall decision, although the review team understand that this process is not standardised across KCETB. KCETB acknowledge within the SER that there are risks to the integrity of this process (e.g. the risk of inconsistencies between assessment of different supervisors and different employers) and the review team understands that further guidance for the assessment of work-based learning is being prepared by the Work Based Learning Group. The review team believes that there is potential to formalise arrangements necessary for the delivery, monitoring and assessment of work experience and placements to ensure a high standard of assessment of learners on work placements.

Commendations:

- The review team commends the work that has been done by KCETB to date in creating the Assessment Policy and working towards standardising arrangements across all KCETB centres and services in relation to the assessment of learners.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that KCETB review the current arrangements that are in place to support the consistency of workplace competency assessment and thereafter create the formal arrangements necessary for the delivery, monitoring and assessment of work experience and placement.

Supports for Learners

During the review visit, the review team found that there is a strong focus within KCETB on ensuring learners have access to learning support. The Adult Education and Guidance Service (AEGS) is central to this initiative, with guidance counsellors having time scheduled in each of the FET centres to support learners with both their learning and progression as well as providing a service to members of the public at pre-admission stage. The service is also able to provide support on funding and grants for education. During the review visit the review team heard from learners who had found this invaluable.

Supports are also available to learners enrolled on the apprenticeship training programmes when additional needs are identified by instructors and the review team heard positive examples of this in practice during the review visit.

The review team finds that good community outreach programmes are also in place to help address the needs of more challenged or marginalised social groups and the review team heard positive examples of the impact of these programmes during the main Review Visit.

This report has already positively referenced another learner support initiative; the Learner Device Loan Scheme which was created to support learners in accessing devices during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the review visit, learners spoke highly of the positive impact of this initiative on their learning journey.

Learners reported great satisfaction with arrangements in KCETB and confirmed to the review team that they felt very supported both in respect of their day-to-day needs and additional requirements. The review team formed a positive impression of ETB staff at all levels operating with a learner centred approach.

The nature and extent of learner support available to learners is explained during learner induction sessions and further explained by teaching staff who remind learners what is available, especially if they identify particular individual needs. This report has previously made recommendations in terms of ensuring consistency in learner induction (see *Access, Transfer and Progression*).

The SER acknowledges the challenges associated with meeting the diverse range of learner needs in FET across various centres. In order to enhance learner access to support, KCETB is in the process of developing and piloting a Learner Support Portal which will provide supports around registration, IT, academic writing, learner wellbeing and key information regarding additional supports. The review team believes that this will assist in providing learners with clear paths to additional support and concurs with the recommendation identified within the SER that, while feedback from learners shows a high satisfaction level with the supports available, a coherent, and systematic approach to planning and managing these supports needs to be implemented.

The review team also concurs with the recommendation identified within the SER that it is important to ensure that the voice of the learner is heard at all levels of provision to ensure that the supports provided are fit for purpose and meet the needs of learners.

Commendation:

- The review team commends the supports that KCETB provides for all learners across its services as well as its strategy to provide a range of supports in each standalone FET centre. This includes the ETB's recognition of the need to consolidate learner supports in the Learner Support Portal.

Recommendation:

- The review recommends that KCETB implement a standard Learner Handbook and finalise development of the Learner Support Portal to ensure that learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and relevant assessment procedures for appeals.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

KCETB inherited nine legacy QA agreements during establishment in 2013 and, upon re-engagement with QQI, made the strategic decision to develop one quality assurance agreement with QQI. KCETB is engaged in a process of on-going development of its processes for quality assurance planning, monitoring and report.

In 2017, QQI engaged all ETBs in a self-evaluation process with a view to reviewing quality assurance at an organisational level as well as determining operational practices. The SER explains that the Executive Self-Evaluation Process undertaken in 2017 was the first such self-evaluation to be undertaken across KCETB. Previous reviews were undertaken by individual centres. The SER expresses an intention to create a formal, centre led self-evaluation process which, it states, will be supported by the QA Team and considered by the QAOC.

The KCETB QA Governance structure is a key development of the re-engagement self-evaluation process, with oversight of QA now led by the QAOC. A key objective is to develop an integrated quality system which is representative of all stakeholders.

The SER sets out KCETB's approach to evaluation as a four-stage cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation and review. This is illustrated in Figure 46 (The Quality Cycle) and can essentially be summarised as follows:

- Planning – In 2018 KCETB conducted its Executive Self-Evaluation Report. This was followed by two annual Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) in 2019 and 2020. The SER states that these were used to benchmark key areas of improvement, but it is not clear to the review team how these relate to this current SER.
- Implementation – KCETB established the QAOC in 2018 to begin implementation of self-evaluation, monitoring and reviewing processes. The SER identifies working groups, centre managers and staff teams as other key stakeholders in implementation.
- Evaluation – The SER summarises this as self-evaluation reports, programme reviews, authentication processes, stakeholder feedback and the Learner Forum
- Review – This is described at the collation of outcomes to be used to inform the next iteration of the QIP.

Figure 46 The Quality Cycle

The Quality Cycle is overseen by the QAOC and aims to have self-evaluation taking place at specified intervals "with a broad systemic focus".

The review team finds that the development of QA is a work in progress within KCETB. The Quality Cycle should inform best practice when monitoring and reviewing provision and services. The review team believes that all stages of the cycle will need to be revisited regularly to ensure programmes are meeting the expectations of all stakeholders.

Figure 6 (Approach to Quality) contained within the SER outlines the stakeholders involved in QA with the learner at the centre radiating out to include Teaching Staff/Instructor, Centre Management, QA Team, Working Groups and finally QAOC. The review team notes the sentiment of a holistic approach

to ensure the voice of all stakeholders is incorporated. During the review visit, the review team heard details of the various consultations undertaken as part of this inaugural self-evaluation process. This process included the submission of a centre evaluation report by each FET centre and surveys and consultations of staff, external stakeholders (including employers, community stakeholders and awarding bodies) and learners. As referenced earlier in this report, it is recommended that there is greater involvement of stakeholders on the various committees including the QAOC and PAC. (See *Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance.*)

Figure 6 KCETB Approach to Quality

During the review visit, the review team heard that engagement with the self-evaluation process had been positive from a range of stakeholders. The majority of individuals the review team met with during the review visit were aware of the process and the SER although not necessarily the details or recommendations contained therein. It was seen as an ideal opportunity for KCETB to reflect and critically review its offerings while creating a future-proofed pathway for all stakeholders. The review team recognises that this can be difficult if staff are shared between centres or on short contracts.

The SER recognises the need for a standardised learner feedback form and the importance of ensuring the learner voice is sufficiently represented on various committees. The review team acknowledges the work being done in gathering feedback but are of the view that KCETB needs to have mechanisms in place to collate this feedback from centres to ensure areas for improvement and development are acted upon in a timely manner. Some FET centres, particularly Post Leaving

Certificate (PLC) Colleges, have learner councils where learners engage proactively in feedback regarding programmes. Youthreach centres complete an annual Centre-Evaluation and Improvement Plan (CEIP). This involves the consideration of staff, management, parent and learner evaluations. This leads to identification of recommendations for improvement which are monitored and reviewed through the Learner Council, staff and Board of Management (BOM) meetings. This is an effective mechanism for capturing and acting upon feedback. Aspects of this CEIP mechanism could be incorporated in the broader provision across KCETB.

The review team finds that KCETB has a number of mechanisms to effectively monitor the implementation of QA procedures, and these include Internal Verification (IV) and External Authentication (EA), Results Approval Panel (RAP), Quality Assurance Oversight meetings, QA Team monitoring and support visits. QQI Dialogue meetings are also part of the Self-evaluation.

The EA process is a good monitoring tool and indicator of quality assurance processes being adhered to by KCETB. The review team agrees that External Authenticators (EAs) bring an external viewpoint regarding fair and consistent assessment in validated programmes. ETBI formed a national panel in 2020 with a view to having a consistent approach to external authentication and EAs are drawn from this panel based on expertise and experience. KCETB's Director of FET sits on ETBI Quality Assurance Steering Group which oversaw the development of this national panel. The EAs issue reports detailing strengths and areas for improvement for the assessment process, and these are reviewed by the panel at RAP meetings. The QA Coordinator issues a report after every RAP meeting, highlighting good practice and areas for corrective action. Information regarding the EA process is presented to the QAOC for analysis.

It is not clear from the SER to what extent there is consistent strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of internal quality assurance reviews and monitoring.

The review team noted strong evidence that KCETB is committed to adopting processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and review that are consistent, comprehensive and evidence based. This is demonstrated by the approach they have taken to this inaugural self-evaluation process. However, the review team considers that more comprehensive use and evaluation of data would make KCETB's self-evaluation processes more robust and support the development of improvement plans towards achieving KCETB's strategic goals.

The review team heard from staff at all levels on the subject of quality during the review visit and it is clear that the message of quality promotion and enhancement has been widely disseminated throughout KCETB. This has been supported by the development of the QA Portal and QA Newsletter mentioned elsewhere in this report (see *Staff Recruitment, Management and Development*). In addition, the review team are aware that KCETB is currently developing a QA Handbook which will contain all QA policies and procedures. It is important that this QA Handbook is prioritised and available to all stakeholders as soon as possible. The review team understands that this handbook is due for completion by September 2023; ideally this would be completed and implemented ahead of this date in order to support KCETB in achieving its strategic goals.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB on its production of the SER. It is clear that KCETB is committed to capturing the voice of all stakeholders in order to provide a high-quality service to the South East region.

- The review team also commends KCETB for setting priorities and focusing in particular on Programme and Awards Approval Policy, QA Information Process & Communication, Assessment and the production of a QA Handbook.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that the QA Handbook is prioritised and finalised ahead of the current completion date of September 2023.

Programme Monitoring & Review

KCETB has a Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS for the next three years with specific targets for various sectors which link directly to future skill needs and national priorities

During the review visit, the review team heard that KCETB conducts programme reviews which are driven by SOLAS, QQI and local requirements. The reviews carried out include a review of module descriptors and assessment techniques as well as FET wide programme reviews. The objective of

these reviews is to obtain feedback from learners and staff across programme disciplines which KCETB uses to monitor their education and training programmes. The outcomes of the reviews are brought to the QAOC for their consideration with a view to inform future planning.

The SER outlines the programme review schedule, and the review team notes that Healthcare was reviewed in 2019 / 2020. This review and found that 90% of learners were happy with the course structure with a further 82% stating that "the content of the course allowed them build on their prior learning and experience". However, the review focuses entirely on qualitative data without consideration or evaluation of quantitative data.

The SER states that feedback from teaching staff involved in the Healthcare review was very informative and identified opportunities for development in terms indicative content and inclusion of specific vocational terminology. It is not clear to the review team if the feedback from staff who engaged in the Healthcare review was acted upon. It is not clear to what extent there is strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of these reviews.

The review team heard from staff who indicated that they would welcome the creation of Communities of Practice to promote and enhance best practice and to ensure a consistent approach to programme review. For example, a formal Community of Practice has been established in Healthcare. Practitioners and wider stakeholders involved in FET saw Communities of Practice as an opportunity to share knowledge and expertise and engage in constructive analysis of FET provision.

The review team believes that the current KCETB review schedule of awards needs to be revisited as, according to the SER and as discussed at during the review visit, it will be 2024 before Engineering, Construction, Woodwork and Manufacturing programmes will be reviewed. The review team felt this should happen sooner, as this is an important sector in the South East. For example, Construction skills are undergoing considerable change in light of Near Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) requirements and the Green Agenda.

All KCETB centres delivering courses have systems in place for monitoring FET provision, these include learner feedback forms, learner assessments, peer reviews, staff evaluations, analysis of data and the QA authentication processes. This is to be welcomed and should inform practice, however, as QA is a process in development, the review team finds that KCETB will need to ensure that evidence is collated from the various stakeholders and data is analysed to inform FET planning going forward.

During the review visit, the review team heard from staff attending the programme review meetings that information regarding programmes is gathered from learners and other stakeholders on a regular basis. Teaching staff/instructors carry out a review with learners and record their feedback on completion of each course module. As noted elsewhere in this report, there is no clear systematic and consistent process of data collection or information sharing within the FET provision. (See *The Learning Environment.*) Although each centre uses learner feedback forms as part of their internal QA procedures, there is no consistent methodology in place to obtain feedback from learners and stakeholders. KCETB states that this is a priority for the Public Information and Communication Group in 2022 to ensure a consistent approach.

The review team suggests KCETB adopt a more structured mechanism to collate and act upon feedback regarding course provision. In order to support programme viability, it is vital that a systematic quality-assured approach to the collection and analysis of information be implemented across the FET service. Furthermore, the information emanating from the PLSS system could be used more effectively to inform programme viability and currency. The review team is of the opinion that better use of data and evidence will support quality within and across the ETB. PLSS data can play a key role in determining programme suitability and future proofing provision. This married with qualitative data, including for example stakeholder feedback, will create a better understanding of organisational effectiveness and recognition by the wider community.

A "Programme Review Tool" is illustrated in Figure 49 within the SER. The SER describes this as "an example of best practice for gathering information for a centre-based review" and states that staff are required to address the headings set out in the diagram:
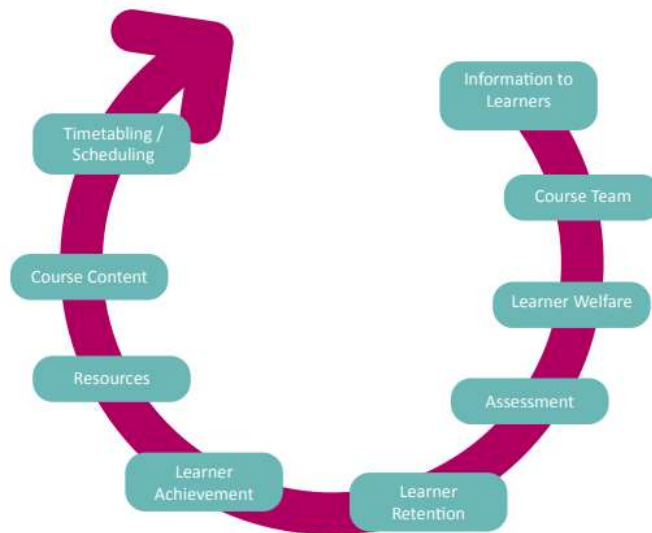
Figure 49 Best Practice Observed for Programme Monitoring and Review

The review team finds that this tool is a positive addition to the monitoring of programmes by centres and staff where a series of scheduled meetings are held and "a summary of the salient points reported by the Programme Coordinators at the final staff meeting of each academic year".

This model is designed to create a picture of what is required when implementing a FET programme, it has all the elements of good practice and should work if used as designed. It has scheduled review meetings devised to support staff who teach across a number of programmes to attend. This monitoring tool is being used in one KCETB centre (OCFE), but the review team covered all aspects included in this monitoring tool in their discussions during the review visit and believe it is a tool that could enhance provision across the service.

All certified programmes are subject to the IV, EA and RAP processes, and all are good indicators of how a programme is operating at centre level. The centre manager or principal is responsible for the monitoring and review of the programmes it provides. As a result, centres can submit proposed changes to module descriptors to the QA Team and follow the steps outlined in Figure 26 within the SER:
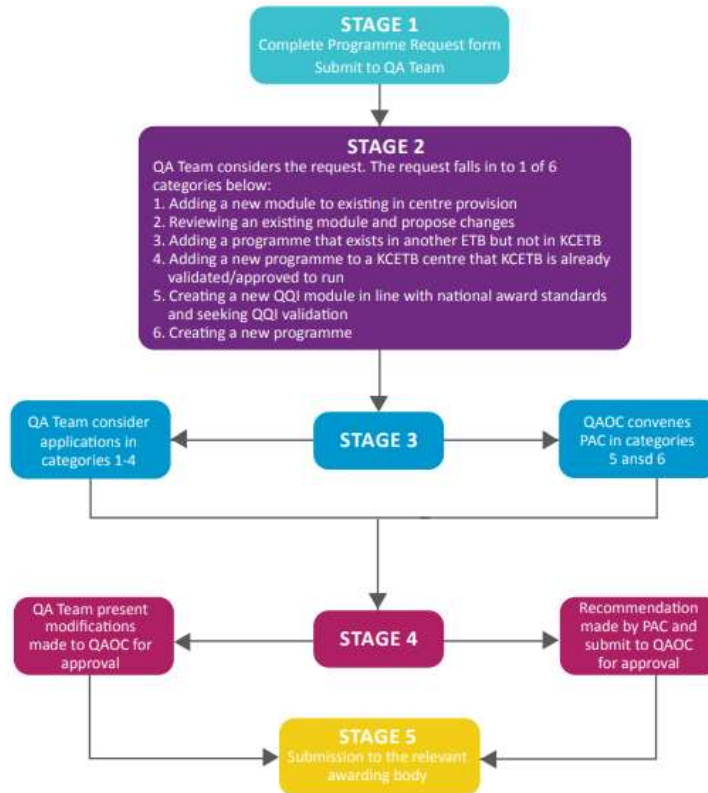
Figure 26 Stages of Programme Development, Approval and Validation

Covid-19 presented additional challenges for all ETBs. As a response to Covid-19, KCETB reviewed its programmes and looked at what supports were required to deliver programmes effectively. Additional wi-fi support was installed in some centres and ICT equipment provided to learners and staff. The review team heard that future programme monitoring will include not just a focus on programme content and assessment but also the capacity of a centre to deliver the said programme.

KCETB currently operates two QA systems, and the Transitional quality Assurance System (TQAS) has particular policies and procedures for programme monitoring and review to ensure programmes are current and meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. Provision which is offered through the sub-contracting of training is primarily under the TQAS and there is monitoring on a regular basis. The Training Services Unit in FET oversees these reviews. The monitoring of all aspects of these external partner programmes is undertaken by a Contracted Training Officer or in the case of apprenticeships by an Authorised Officer. Regular meetings are held by KCETB staff throughout the course of contracted training programme to discuss progress, achievement of goals and targets. The data collected is analysed and used to develop an improvement plan incorporating corrective action. The review team noted that this monitoring of provision under the TQAS was thorough, and some elements could be incorporated into the broader QA system.

The review team considers that programmes offered by other awarding bodies have very comprehensive monitoring processes in place and centres must show strict compliance and adherence to standards before engaging in programme delivery. Regular monitoring of course delivery takes place through site visits, online review meetings and learner evaluation forms being completed for feedback purposes. Some organisations, for example, the British Horse Society, have engaged in contacting learners directly at short or no notice to gather feedback of their experience of the course. The review team met with representatives of other awarding bodies during the review week and heard that those awarding bodies carry out QA audits and consider KCETB to be "low risk" due to the level of their engagement and interaction with QA monitoring processes.

A Learner Forum was established in 2019 and the first "Voice of the Learner Forum" was held in November 2019 which highlighted some key areas for review, notably the Assessment Policy. The Assessment Policy, which is now available through the QA Portal and published on the QA website, addressed areas such as the induction process, the assessments calendars early distribution, the integration of assessment, and fairness with reference to assessment extensions and the need to update some modules. The review team regards this as evidence of good practice that KCETB acted on this feedback.

The review team heard that having a QA Portal in place is seen by all FET staff as a very positive initiative as all policies and procedures are easily available to staff. The QA Team now in place in KCETB will play a central role in supporting centres in ensuring that the vision, mission and goals of KCETB are met and recommendations arising from annual reviews are implemented.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB on the development of the QA Portal which houses all QA policies and procedures and reviews.

Recommendations:

- The review team recommends that KCETB develops a systematic approach to reviewing course content to ensure modules and programmes are fit for purpose for both learners and

industry and re-examine programme review schedule to link with national priorities. This could be supported by:

- o Putting mechanisms in place to standardise the approach to learner feedback to ensure areas for improvement development are acted upon in a timely manner. This will support KCETB's work to ensure that learner voice is heard at all levels of provision.
- o Making greater use of data and evidence to enhance performance, and support quality within and across the ETB. PLSS data can play a key role in determining programme suitability and future proofing provision.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

KCETB has developed some key relationships with external stakeholders and third parties, including the Bus and Coach Association and the Irish Road Haulage Association. There is an awareness within KCETB of the locality and region within which it operates, and some key target sectors have been identified. The review team finds that there is opportunity to work more closely with the Local Enterprise Boards and County Development teams in formally examining the economic opportunities that are developing regionally. KCETB has worked with the Regional Skills Group to effectively engage with employer groups, and this was evidenced in the Skills to Advance provision. There is opportunity for the FET team to develop key industry stakeholder advisory groups that could meet regularly and provide ongoing resource to KCETB.

The review team considers that second providers are actively managed and formally reviewed. A register of approved suppliers is maintained. This was evidenced in interviews and in RAP reports provided. There was good awareness by third party suppliers of the QA policies and the FET team communicated well with them. The review team acknowledges that there is a risk to brand awareness when services are contracted, and consideration should be given to how learners in such situations might have continued association with KCETB after programme delivery by a third party.

The legacy and ethos of KCETB as a learner led institution is well founded and maintained. Employer services is a developing area. More FET training is employer driven at present and increasing funding streams for employment training are emerging.

KCETB has an opportunity to create brand awareness with industry as a training and development partner. Companies are increasingly developing their own internal Learning Management Systems to

assist in the development of workplace skills and competencies. These are often cloud based with resources available via apps. KCETB operates in a dynamic, changing employer landscape. One measure that would assist in this area could be the provision of a business support unit for the region. The unit could develop employer engagement and promote new connections with business in the region.

Two instances emerged during the course of the review visit where employers did not have their training needs met following contact with KCETB. On deeper examination by the review team, the employers required short duration unaccredited training. In each case the FET team examined several options of delivering service to the employer concerned but were unable to match the requirement of the employer with the requirements of the funding channel being used. In each case, the organisations were significant local employers. This aspect of KCETB's work merits further engagement as with the current tight labour market, employers might be persuaded into providing accreditation over time to employees as a further incentive to employment and retention.

The review team finds that there is wide-ranging engagement with local community groups and KCETB serves these groups in very practical and financial ways. This service should be highlighted more dynamically on KCETB website as it is a real success story. Agreements are in place which are reviewed when annual grants are administered. Some groups expressed a wish for multi annual agreements, but it is acknowledged that this may not be possible due to the short-term and irregular nature of many related funding streams.

Commendations:

- The review team commends KCETB on its engagement within local communities who are unequivocally appreciative of this work.

- The review team commends KCETB for its extensive and proactive engagement with the South East Regional Skills Forum.

Section

4

Conclusions

Section 4: Conclusions

Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

The review process took place during a period when the usual operations of KCETB were significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a credit to the organisation and all of its stakeholders that it has engaged so fully and openly with the inaugural review process and the review team during such a challenging period.

The review process itself followed the guidelines specified by QQI, but all engagement between the review team with KCETB was undertaken through remote video meetings. This was challenging for all participants but was nonetheless effective. The only obvious and unfortunate disadvantage of the virtual process was that the review team was unable to visit KCETB's centres and to meet in person with learners, staff and other stakeholders. This would have provided a level of engagement and immersion in an institutional review that cannot be achieved remotely.

Despite the limitations of the virtual review, at all times throughout the review process, the review team was struck by commitment to learners, and to supporting its local communities.

This concluding section draws together the commendations and recommendations made throughout this report. They arose from the very positive and open engagement with KCETB that the review team experienced throughout the review process. The review team hopes that these outcomes will be positively received and used by ETB to support the realisation of its mission and strategic goals.

Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The review team formed a positive impression of ETB staff at all levels operating with a learner centred approach. The review team is confident that learners are clearly KCETB's priority, and this was demonstrated at all levels. Current and past learners spoke very positively of their supportive

learning environment within KCETB. It is clear that learners feel very well supported by their tutors and other members of staff.

The review team also praises KCETB for their support and responsiveness during Covid-19 restrictions.

It is clear both from the SER and from the review visit that staff at all levels are committed to a culture of continuous improvements in teaching, learning and assessments. Progress has been made with the successful development and implementation of the Assessment Policy. Further improvements are either planned or in progress, for example, the Learner Support Portal and the QA Handbook, and this demonstrates KCETB's willingness to what is described in the SER as the "Quality Assurance Journey in FET."

Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

KCETB's Self-Evaluation Report details its journey from its re-engagement with QQI in 2018 to the present day and is guided by the QQI Core and the Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. KCETB had 9 QQI agreements and is evolving towards a single agreement. It is currently operating two QA systems incorporating the former FÁS Transitional Quality Assurance System (TQAS). The organisation has demonstrated the steps it has taken to develop and promote a quality assurance system that is designed and supported by all stakeholders engaging with KCETB. The layout of the SER shows a thought process that has the learner at the heart of the organisation, and this was evident throughout the review meetings with all stakeholders from management to staff members, learners both past and present, employers, and awarding bodies. The SER has recommendations recorded under each subsection, which shows the organisation's awareness of their distance travelled and their planned destination. It highlights the importance of having an agreed approach across the organisation while taking into account the diversity of learners and the requirements of industries and communities alike. The review team concludes that KCETB's approach to QA demonstrates a willingness to explore opportunities for development and greater engagement by all stakeholders in the design and delivery of further education and training programmes.

Commendations

The review team commends KCETB for:

1. Ensuring that the delivery and realisation of its Mission, Vision, Core Values and Strategic Goals are strongly reflected and communicated across all its operations.

2. The approach it has taken to the self-evaluation process and, in particular, the way that it has engaged and consulted with stakeholders during the Covid-19 period. It is clear that KCETB is committed to capturing the voice of all stakeholders in order to provide a high-quality service to the South East region.

3. The work that it has done to date in formalising the structures to underpin the governance and management of quality assurance and to provide a platform for continuous review and further improvement.

4. The 5-stage Policy Development process and the oversight of the QAOC provide an excellent approach to the ongoing development and revision of QA Policies and Procedures and the review team was impressed by the buy-in of so many staff across a wide range of centres and levels to making QA a live process. The QA portal is an ideal platform to use to disseminate information to staff.

5. The way that its staff have embraced the move to online learning creatively and are keen to develop new skills in support of learning, in the absence of comprehensive documentation around Blended Learning.

6. Its creation of the post of PD & TEL Coordinator as well as the work done to date establishing the QA Portal and QA Newsletter for staff. The review team also commends the TEL / PD Co-ordinator who was in post in 2020 for the timely roll out of IT training in response to Covid-19.

7. The development of a 5-stage programme approval process. The review team also commends KCETB for setting priorities and focusing in particular on Programme and Awards

Approval Policy, QA Information Process & Communication, Assessment and the production of a QA Handbook.

8. The assessment processes outlined in the SER and Assessment Policy, which offer a robust and clear route to consistent assessment across the ETB.

9. The way that the Assessment Policy has achieved significant buy-in and for the good awareness of assessment issues across centres involved in the review.

10. The manner and speed with which it began meeting learners' IT requirements during the pandemic. It was clear that many staff responded in an energetic and productive fashion and have been providing excellent support to learners whenever they present with technical queries. To do this with such a small central IT team was very impressive.

11. The rollout of GDPR training to all staff and the availability of cover to respond to data protection queries is commended by the review team, especially given the variety of other tasks undertaken by OSD.

12. Its acknowledgement of the data diversity challenge and commitment to making greater use of data.

13. The development of the QA Portal and internal newsletters which were praised by staff during the review visit.

14. Its engagement with, and attendance at, public business and skills fora.

15. Providing a supportive learning environment. It is clear that current and past learners feel very well supported by their tutors and by other KCETB staff.

16. The work that has been done by KCETB to date in creating the Assessment Policy and working towards standardising arrangements across all KCETB centres and services in relation to the assessment of learners.

17. The supports that KCETB provides for all learners across its services as well as its strategy to provide a range of supports in each standalone FET centre. This includes the ETB's recognition of the need to consolidate learner supports in the Learner Support Portal.

18. Its production of the SER. It is clear that KCETB is committed to capturing the voice of all stakeholders in order to provide a high-quality service to the South East region.

19. Setting priorities and focusing in particular on Programme and Awards Approval Policy, QA Information Process & Communication, Assessment and the production of a QA Handbook.

20. The development of the QA Portal which houses all QA policies and procedures and reviews.

21. Its engagement within local communities who are unequivocally appreciative of this work.

22. Its extensive and proactive engagement with the South East Regional Skills Forum.

Recommendations

The review team recommends:

1. KCETB reviews its approach to specifying and cross-referencing recommendations within the inaugural review SER and associated institutional documentation, in order to improve clarity and accountability.

2. Alongside its own recommendations in relation to governance and management of QA, the review team recommends that it considers:

    - Opportunities to involve the Board more fully in self-evaluation and the monitoring of quality improvement plans and other FET performance indicators.
    - Group membership (including the ISRG if it is maintained), to involve other relevant stakeholders.
    - Opportunities to increase external representatives on QA committees (QAOC and PAC) to ensure impartiality.
    - The function of the various working groups, to avoid any potential unnecessary and potentially confusing duplication of QA activities.
    - The structure and roles of the QA Team, to ensure that it has the necessary capacity and capability.

3. The new Statement of Strategy (2022-2026) is strongly aligned with the outcomes of self-assessment, including the outcomes of the inaugural review. The review team also recommends that KCETB's self-evaluation action planning is cross referenced to its mission and strategy.

4. The Teaching and Learning policy is concluded and communicated to all stakeholders as soon as possible.

5. KCETB conducts a CPD needs analysis across centres. The output of this would feed into the creation of a Professional Development Strategy to support KCETB's progress towards achieving its strategic goals. The review team recommends that consideration be given to establishing a formal structure operating through centre managers to ensure that the development needs of each centre as well as the collective needs of KCETB can be taken into and addressed in a CPD strategy. Related to the CPD strategy, the review team recommends KCETB develop an induction programme for new staff around governance, policies and processes to ensure a continued consistency in message.

6. KCETB fills the currently vacant TEL Co-ordinator (or equivalent) position with a suitably qualified and experienced professional with a background in teaching and learning using technology.

7. Formal communities of practice are created to support staff development and sharing of best practice. Community of practice networks could be established for staff teaching in specific areas as well as in subject-specific areas in addition to any existing communities of practice already established.

8. The creation of a consistent KCETB wide policy governing the formal staff appraisal process. KCETB may wish to consider introducing an appropriate model of teaching observation to support staff appraisal and development and the realisation of institutional strategic objectives.

9. KCETB continues to build upon its collaborative approach to developing programmes and awards withs industry. The review team agrees with the requirement (identified in the SER) to work closely with employers with a view to developing leading programmes for industry. This will require a practice of horizon scanning to see what opportunities exist for collaboration with industry and to ensure programmes align with upcoming employment opportunities within the region. One such opportunity is the potential for development of Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Micro-qualifications/Digital Badging.

10. KCETB review their current implementation of the RPL Policy to ensure it is being applied consistently cross centres and programmes and to develop a formal community of practice around RPL. It might be helpful to compile and disseminate RPL studies to assist both the learner and teaching staff in understanding and applying RPL within FET.

11. The Assessment Policy should be updated to provide clear and practical guidelines around plagiarism detection and actions to be taken so that a consistent approach can be applied across centres. In addition, the review team recommends that KCETB clarify its position with regard to online invigilation in its Blended Learning, Assessment and Data Protection Policies, having regard to QQI publications on this topic. Should KCETB decide to employ online invigilation, clear guidelines and training needs to be provided, with appropriate checks put in place.

12. KCETB consider the resourcing of data management across its centres to ensure that an ETB wide data strategy can be implemented and data related issues can be addressed cross functionally within the ETB. The review team recommends that KCETB consider:

    o Conducting an audit of where learner records are stored (both online and in physical locations) and documentation on who has access to this information should be completed as soon as possible. This should be referenced in the Data Protection, Records Retention and Assessment policies and updated at appropriate regular intervals
    o Developing Standard Operating Procedures for all of their centres and second providers around data protection, to include an audit schedule and consideration of the most effective way to achieve high level oversight of data management between IT and OSD.
    o Prioritising the unification of data through an appropriate IT system and policy to provide for a single source of truth to inform decision making.

13. KCETB should develop a clear and comprehensive corporate branding strategy and policy to showcase their offerings. To support with public information and communication, the review team recommends that KCETB administer constant updates and resources on the public facing website.

14. Formal arrangements in relation to the monitoring of teaching and learning be standardised across all KCETB centres and services to ensure a consistent approach.

15. KCETB review the current arrangements that are in place to support the consistency of workplace competency assessment and thereafter create the formal arrangements necessary for the delivery, monitoring and assessment of work experience and placement.

16. KCETB implement a standard Learner Handbook and finalise development of the Learner Support Portal to ensure that learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and relevant assessment procedures for appeals.

17. The QA Handbook is prioritised and finalised ahead of the current completion date of September 2023.

18. KCETB develops a systematic approach to reviewing course content to ensure modules and programmes are fit for purpose for both learners and industry and re-examine programme review schedule to link with national priorities. This could be supported by:

   o Putting mechanisms in place to standardise the approach to learner feedback to ensure areas for improvement development are acted upon in a timely manner. This will support KCETB's work to ensure that learner voice is heard at all levels of provision.
   o Making greater use of data and evidence to enhance performance, and support quality within and across the ETB. PLSS data can play a key role in determining programme suitability and future proofing provision.

Statements on Quality Assurance

The effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation

The review team considered and evaluated a wide range of documents as part of the review process. These included the SER, a wide range of publicly available documents regarding KCETB, and a large number of additional documents that were provided in response to requests made as part of the review.

During the main review visit, the review team met with learners, employers, second providers, community representatives, other external stakeholders, teaching and support staff, managers at all levels, and the chair and other representatives of the KCETB Board. Based on the evidence gathered, the review team is satisfied that KCETB has extensive and developing QA procedures that are being effectively implemented at present.

Implementing their own self-evaluation recommendations alongside those identified in this report will further improve the effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation.

The extent to which existing QA procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and Policies

KCETB have a strong commitment to QA, as articulated through their approach to the "QA Journey in FET" and the "FET Inaugural Review Process" both of which are comprehensively presented in the SER. QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines & Policies have strongly influenced and shaped all aspects of their approach to QA. The establishment of the QAOC and the developing QA Team have been effective to-date.

KCETB has an ambitious and comprehensive approach to further developing and documenting its QA processes. The recently developed "12-Point SER Implementation Plan" provides a wide-ranging action plan, that can be further strengthened by building on the commendations and adopting the recommendations outlined in this report. It is notable that the first task in this action plan related to developing its QA Handbook in early 2022. The review team would strongly endorse this as a priority for KCETB, and the need to continue to align with QQI QA guidance and policies, including QQIs Statutory QA Guidelines. KCETB recognises the need for further development and refinement to ensure more comprehensive and fuller adherence to these guidelines and policies.

The review team is satisfied that KCETB complies with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education. KCETB facilitates access to programmes by promoting courses through a range of methods including course booklets and flyers, the KCETB website, advertising in various media and networks with key stakeholders. In 2020, KCETB also offers a series of Virtual Open Days for secondary schools within the region. Upon application, skills checks are conducted to ensure that programmes meet the needs of individual learners and are at the appropriate level. KCETB's Adults Education Guidance Service (AEGS) is key to this process and supports learners in their decision making around courses that meet their needs. Once on programme, learners have access to a range of support to enable them to participate fully and successfully in teaching and learning. KCETB facilitates progression to higher levels of training (or transfer where appropriate) via engagement with teaching staff and AEGS.

The enhancement of quality by the institution (through governance, policy, and procedures).

The review team was consistently impressed by KCETB's commitment to all learners through its enhancement of quality. This is demonstrated through its structures of governance, the enthusiastic commitment of staff at all levels, and its approach to the inaugural review. This was evidenced by extensive documentation and through KCETB's comprehensive approach to consulting with a wide range of learners and external stakeholders. KCETB is a learner and community-focussed institution which has embarked on a clear path to improvement through QA. Quality is demonstrably being enhanced by the actions of staff and stakeholders, through the implementation of a clear corporate strategy that focuses on excellence and learners.

Section

5

ETB Review Response

Section 5: ETB Review Response

Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board

Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report

Introduction

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) welcomes the Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) Inaugural Statutory Review carried out in December 2021. The preparation for and the engagement with this inaugural review was a further developmental step in KCETB's quality journey.

The engagement in the review process, including the engagement of centres and services in a Self-evaluation process, the ETB's overall Self-evaluation report and the weeklong panel engagement provided KCETB with an opportunity to chart a clear road map for the continuation of our quality journey.

Recent years have presented challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, not least the requirement to 'virtually' host the Review Team visit. KCETB would like to commend the engagement of the ETB staff, learners, and stakeholders and to acknowledge the dialogue with the Review Team.

Response to Commendations

KCETB accepts the Review Team's commendations and recommendations following their week-long visit and 32 meetings with 119 staff, learners, and stakeholders. The review report sets out 22 commendations and KCETB is pleased that the panel affirmed the areas of good practice identified and evidenced within our ETB.

The panel commended the approach taken to the Self-evaluation process, we believe that this approach, where each centre and service undertook their own Self-evaluation gave ownership of the process to members of the wider FET Service, and further builds on the culture of quality which we are embedding in our organisation.

We are particularly pleased that the team recognised:

- the work that has been undertaken to date in formalising the structures that underpin the governance and management of quality assurance.
- the distance travelled in terms of policy and process development to include but not limited to the Assessment Policy and the Programme Approval Process.
- the communication and collaboration channels employed by the ETB through the QA Portal, the establishment of and engagement with consultative forums both internally and externally.
- the supports provided to learners across all our services including the advances made in digital supports and the development of the Learner Support Portal.

Response to Recommendations

The review team notes the reflective nature of the Self-evaluation carried out by KCETB in preparation for the review. We are reassured that the team has confirmed in the main our identification of the priority areas for improvement which are outlined in the action plan in the Self-evaluation report.

KCETB notes the panel's recommendations that consideration needs to be given to the "*creation of a consistent KCETB wide policy governing the formal staff appraisal process*" and the formalisation of "*arrangements in relation to the monitoring of teaching and learning be standardised across all KCETB centres*". It must be outlined however, that all ETBs work within an agreed national framework for such matters and therefore KCETB is limited in how these recommendations could be considered.

KCETB recognises the merit in the review team's recommendation that there should be "*greater use of data and evidence to enhance performance, and support quality within and across the ETB*". Consideration is being given to how data can be further used more effectively to support planning, monitoring, evaluation, and review. This consideration is being supported by the ongoing evolution of the national FET data management system (PLSS), the use of Data Analysis systems and the next iteration of the SOLAS-ETB Strategic Performance Agreements which outline performance targets over a three-year period.

The panel recommendation that KCETB "*develops a systematic approach to reviewing course content to ensure modules and programmes are fit for purpose for both learners and industry*" requires that significant work be undertaken nationally in this regard as the process of programme review is linked to the recognition of awards and award standards, which are the responsibility of QQI. The review of programmes and awards affects all 16 ETBs and other providers, and there are aspects of this review which need a co-ordinated sectoral approach.

KCETB acknowledge the recommendation set down by the panel that the current programme review schedule is re-examined "*to link with national priorities*", however, the schedule currently in place has been developed in response to the volume of awards most relevant to our suite of FET programmes, as opposed to an industry approach to programme review. KCETB will continue to conduct the

programme reviews in line with the schedule drafted and will work collaboratively with QQI, in its role as custodian of ETB programmes and awards to address issues related to programmatic and award reviews.

Ensuring a robust QA Governance process has been a key goal for KCETB over the last number of years. The recommendation to consider "*opportunities to involve the Board more fully*" in our QA process is currently facilitated by having a KCETB Board member on our QA Oversight Committee, by having additional external members to ensure impartiality in our decision-making processes and through the required reporting to the board. This is in line with the statutory responsibilities of the board.

Ensuring the voice of staff and learners is heard in programme review and policy development is a key priority in ensuring the effectiveness of our QA processes. KCETB has commenced work on the formation of a standardised approach to learner feedback and measures have been put in place to ensure the learner voice is captured consistently across all centres. Significant work will be undertaken to ensure the QA handbook is completed within the timeframe stipulated in the report.

Conclusion
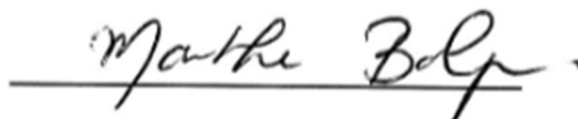
KCETB values the opportunity afforded by the Inaugural Review process to engage in internal conversations with staff, learners, and partners. This Self-evaluation process has led to the identification of key recommendations, providing us with a clear roadmap for the continuation of our quality journey. These recommendations will be considered within the context of our existing action plan.

We also thank QQI for their guidance and support throughout the review process.

Eileen Curtis

Chief Executive

Martha Bolger

Director of Further Education and Training

Appendices

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

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

1   Background and Context for the Review

1.1.1   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 20171F2. 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.

1.1.2   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.

1.1.3   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.

1.1.4   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

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² 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).

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

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

2   Purposes

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

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through
1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs	• Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews. • Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation. phases of the review. • Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them. • Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures. • Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB.

2. To provide feedback to ETBs about organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.	• Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e. how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance. • Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level. • Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards. • Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.
3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.	• 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.
4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.	• Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings. • The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning.
5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.	• Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB. • Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence. • Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context. • Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation
6. To provide an opportunity for ETBs to articulate their stage of development, mission and objectives and demonstrate the quality assurance of their provision, both individually and as a sector.	• 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;2F[3]
- 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

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[3] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf

and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows[4]:

Chairperson

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

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

Co-ordinating Reviewer

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

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

All Review Team Members

4.5   The role of all review team members includes:

- Preparing for the review by reading and critically evaluating all written material;

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

- 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

Day 1: Monday 13th December 2021

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
08:30-09:00	ETB Review Co-Ordinator & FET Director	ETB Review Co-Ordinator	Commencement Meeting
		FET Director	
09:00-09:30	Private Review Team Meeting		
09:30-10:15	1. ETB Chief Executive & Senior Management Team	Chief Executive	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
		FET Director	
		Director of Schools	
		Director of OSD	
		Adult Education Officer	
		Adult Education Officer	
		Adult Education Officer	

		Training Services Manager	
		Assistant Training Services Manager	
		PLC Principal: Carlow Institute of Further Education & Training (CIFET)	
		Deputy Principal: Ormonde College of Further Education (OCFE)	
10.15-10.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
10:45-11:00	Review Team Break		
11:00-11:45	**2. Parallel sessions with L1-4 Learners**		
	2a. L1-4 learners (parallel session 1)	Youthreach learner	Discussion of learner experience
		Youthreach learner	
		Youthreach learner	
	2b. L1-4 Learners (parallel session 2)	Adult Literacy learner	
		Adult Literacy learner	

		Adult Literacy learner	
		Adult Literacy learner	
11:45-12:30	Panel Review Team Meeting		
12:30-13:30	Review Team Lunch/Break		
13:30-14:15	**3. Parallel sessions with L5-6 Learners**		
	3a. L5-6 learners (parallel session 3)	VTOS Kilkenny learner	Discussion of learner experience
		OCFE learner	
		CIFET learner	
		CIFET learner	
		CIFET learner	
	3b. L5-6 learners (parallel session 4)	VTOS Kilkenny	
		CIFET learner	
		CIFET learner	
		CIFET learner	

14:15-14:30	Review Team Break		
14:30-15:15	**4. Parallel sessions with Past Learners, Apprentices and Employed Learners**		
	4a. Past Learners (Parallel Session 5)	FET Past learner	Discussion of learner experience
		CIFET past learner	
		Training Services past learner	
	4b. Apprentices and Employed Learners (Parallel session 6)	Training Services apprentice	
		Training Services apprentice	
		Training Services apprentice	
		Training Services apprentice	
15:15-15.45:	Private Review Team Meeting		
15:45-16.00	Review Team Break		
16:00-16:45	**5. Learner support services staff (e.g. literacy, English language etc.)**	Resource Worker: CALS (Carlow Adult Literacy Services)	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and

		ESOL Tutor: KALS (Kilkenny Adult Literacy Service)	enhancement of support services to learners
		Apprenticeship Support: KALS	
		Resource Worker: KALS	
		Tutor: CALS	
		Tutor: CALS	
16:45-17:15	Private Review Team Meeting		

Day 2: Tuesday 14th December 2021

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
09.00-09.15	ETB Review Coordinator	Adult Education Officer/ETB Review Coordinator	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.15-09:45	Private Review Team Meeting		
9.45 - 10.30	**6. Parallel sessions - Employer and regional skills bodies representatives**		
	6a. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives (parallel session 1)	Manager: South East Regional Skills Forum	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		General Manager: Dolmen Hotel	
		HR Manager: Glanbia	
		CEO: Cartoon Saloon	
	6b. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives (parallel session 2)	Representative: Carlow County Childcare Committee	
		Owner: JJ Kavanagh Bus Company	
		Representative: Irish Road Hauliers Association	
		Representative: Defence Forces	
10:30-11:00	Private Review Team Meeting		
11:00 - 11:15	Review Team Break		
11:15-12:00	7. ETB Employer Engagement Function	Support Worker: Early Learning and Care	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local

		Authorised Officer: Training Services	skills needs and quality assuring provision
		Work Experience Teacher: BTEI Kilkenny	
		Assistant Training Services Manager	
		Adult Literacy Organiser: KALS	
		Instructor: Commis Chef	
12:00-12:30	Private Review Team Meeting		
12:30-13:30	Review Team Lunch/Break		
13:30-14:15	8. Academic staff (cross-section of services and programmes)	Tutor: Community Education	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Teacher: OCFE	
		Part Time Provision Teacher: BTEI and Adult Literacy	
		Teacher: Grennan Equestrian	
		Teacher: CIFET	
		Instructor: Electrical Apprenticeship	
14:15-14:45	Private Review Team Meeting		
14:45-15:30	**9. Parallel sessions with External Stakeholders**		
	9a. External Stakeholders / Community Providers & Groups (Parallel session 3)	Representative: Carlow County Development Partnership (CCDP)	Discussion of ETB engagement with Community Groups
		Representative: Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP)	

		Parental and Community Education/QQI Co-ordinator: St Catherine's Community Centre	
		Representative: Ucasadh	
		Learning Coordinator: KCAT Arts Centre	
		Activation Support Team Manager: Department of Social Protection	
	9b. TEL/PD (Parallel session 4)	TEL/PD Coordinator (recently appointed AEO)	Discussion on role of TEL/PD in supporting quality assurance and enhancement
		Teacher and TEL Support	
		Teacher: CIFET	
		Teacher: BTEI Carlow	
		Co-ordinator: Youthreach Kilkenny	
		Tutor:KALC	
15:30 - 16:00	Private Review Team Meeting		
16:00 - 16:15	Review Team Break		
16:15 - 17:00	10. Second Providers (External Providers)	LTI Co-ordinator: Young Irish Film Makers	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers (External Providers)
		Manager: Carlow Youth Training	
		LTI Co-ordinator: St Catherine's	
		Manager: Creative Training	
		Manager: Hartley People	

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
		Programme Development Officer (PDO): National Learning Network (NLN)	
17:00-17:30	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date 3: Wednesday 15th December 2021

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
09.00-09.15	**ETB Review Coordinator**		**Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator**
9.15-09:45	Private Review Team Meeting		
09:45-10:30	**11. Parallel sessions (3) with Heads of Centres**		
	11a. Heads of Centres (Parallel session 1)	Principal: CIFET	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Assistant Training Services Manager	
		Co-ordinator: Youthreach Kilkenny	
		Co-ordinator: VTOS Kilkenny	
		Co-ordinator: Community Education Carlow	
		Adult Guidance Co-ordinator: Carlow	
	11b. Heads of Centres (Parallel session 2)	Deputy Principal: OCFE	
		Co-ordinator: BTEI Kilkenny	

		Adult Literacy Organiser: Kilkenny	
		Co-ordinator: Community Education Kilkenny	
		Community Training Officer	
	11c. Heads of Centres (Parallel session 3)	Manager: Training Services	
		Co-ordinator: BTEI Carlow	
		Adult Literacy Organiser: Carlow	
		Co-ordinator: VTOS Carlow	
		Adult Guidance Co-ordinator: Kilkenny	
		Authorised Training Officer: Contracted Training	
10:30-11:00	Private Review Team Meeting		
11:00-11:45	12. Guidance Counsellors/ Admissions Staff/ Programme Managers	Adult Guidance Coordinator: Carlow	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression
		Adult Guidance Counsellor	
		Principal: KCVS, DEIS to FET initiative	
		Tutor: Adult Literacy Services Kilkenny / RPL Support	
		Deputy Principal: CIFET	
		Recruitment Officer: Training Services	
11:45-12:30	Private Review Team Meeting		
12:30-13:30	Review Team Lunch/Break		

13:30-14:15	**13. Parallel sessions with OSD Human Resources Staff and Finance, Facilities and ICT Staff**		
	13a. OSD Human Resources Staff – Director of OSD and Head of HR only (parallel session 1)	Director OSD	
		Senior Staff Officer, HR Recruitment	
		Senior Staff Officer, Compliance and Data Protection Officer	
	13b. Finance, Facilities and ICT Staff – Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Services, IT, FET Finance Support only (parallel session 2)	Head of Corporate Services	
		Head of Finance	
		FET Finance Support	
		ICT Services Team	
14:15-14:45	Private Review Team Meeting		
14:45-15:00	Review Team Break		
15:00-15:45	**14. Parallel sessions with External stakeholders (Higher Education and Awarding Bodies)**		
	14a. Parallel session 1 (Higher Education)	Waterford IT Representative: Further Education Progression Office	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs, including consideration of ATP
		Waterford IT Representative: Further Education Progression Office	
		Carlow College Representative: Admissions Officer	

		IT Carlow Representative: Education Progression Officer	
	14b. Parallel session 2 (Awarding Bodies)	Managing Director: Sanctuary Beauty Group (and CIDESCO representative)	Discussion of quality assurance arrangements of programmes leading to awards of different awarding bodies
		Representative: City and Guilds	
		Quality Team Manager: City and Guilds	
		Education Development Lead: CIBTAC	
		Global Assessment Lead (Sport and Fitness), Commercial Manager (IRE): ITEC/VTCT	
-		Education Development Technical Manager: British Horse Society	
15:45-16:30	Private Review Team Meeting		

Day 4: Thursday 16th December 2021

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
9:00-9:15	ETB Review Coordinator & FET Director	Review Coordinator	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9:15-9:45	Private Review Team Meeting		
9:45-10:30	15. Quality Office	Adult Education Officer	
		Quality Assurance Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
		Quality Assurance Co-ordinator: Quality Assurance Team	
		Staff Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
		Resource Worker: ELC Support	
10:30-11:00	Private Review Team Meeting		
11:00-11:15	Review Team Break		
11:15-12:00	16. Self-Evaluation Team	Director Further Education and Training	
		Quality Assurance Co-ordinator: Quality Assurance Team	
		External FET Subject Matter Expert	
		Registrar: IT Carlow	
		Adult Education Officer	
		Past Learner Representative	
12:00-12:30	Private Review Team Meeting		
12:30-13:30	Review Team Lunch/Break		

13:30-14:15	**17. Parallel sessions with Programme Approval/Review governance groups/committees and Quality Council**		
	17a. Programme Approval/Review governance groups/committees (parallel session 1)	Adult Education Officer	KCETB Programme Approval Panel with SME from recent validation programme
		Quality Assurance Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
		Quality Assurance Co-ordinator: Quality Assurance Team	
		Staff Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
		Assistant Training Services Manager	
		SME: SUP & LLA Programme Development	
	17b. Quality Council (parallel session 2)	Chief Executive	Discussion of the approach to, and mechanisms for, quality assurance and enhancement
		Director of Further Education and Training	
		Deputy Principal: Ormonde College of Further Education	
		Adult Education Officer	
		PLC Principal: Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training	
		Training Services Manager	
14:15-14:45	Private Review Team Meeting		

14:45-15:00	Review Team Break		
15:00-15:45	18. KCETB Board Members		Discussion of role of the KCETB board in quality assurance
		KCETB Board member	
		KCETB Board member	
15:45-16:15	Private Review Team Meeting		
16:15-17:00	**19. Parallel sessions with ETB Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee * and ETB Public Information and Communication Group**		
	19a. ETB Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee * (parallel session 1)	Deputy Principal: Ormonde College of Further Education	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment and the development of policy and procedures
		Adult Literacy Organiser: Carlow Adult Learning Service	
		Deputy Principal: Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training	
		Instructor: Commis Chef	
		Teacher: Ormonde College of Further Education	
		Teacher: Ormonde College of Further Education	

	19b. ETB Public Information and Communication Group (parallel session 2)	Adult Education Officer	
			Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of public information and communication
		Staff Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
		Community Training Officer	
		Co-ordinator: VTOS Kilkenny	
		Teacher: OCFE	
		Deputy Principal: CIFET	
17:00-17:30	Private Review Team Meeting		

Day 5: Friday 17th December 2021

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
09:00-11:00	Private Review Team Meeting		
11:00-11:30	Review Team Break		
11: -11:30	20. QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director	ETB Review Coordinator FET Director	QQI gathers feedback on the review process (Review team does not attend)
11.30-12:00	Private Review Team Meeting		
12-12.30	**21. Oral Feedback: ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners**	Chief Executive	Oral feedback on initial review findings
		Director Further Education and Training	
		Director of OSD	
		Director of Schools	
		Adult Education Officer	
		Adult Education Officer	

Adult Education Officer	
Training Services Manager	
Assistant Training Services Manager	
PLC Principal: Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training	
Deputy Principal: Ormonde College of Further Education	
Head of Corporate Services	
Adult Literacy Organiser: Carlow Adult Learning Service	
Quality Assurance Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
Quality Assurance Co-ordinator: Quality Assurance Team	
Staff Officer: Quality Assurance Team	
Registrar: Institute of Technology Carlow	
Manager: South East Regional Skills Forum	
Past Learner Representative	
Inaugural Review Steering Group member	
Community Training Officer	
VTOS Co-ordinator	
Teacher: OCFE	
Deputy Principal: Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training	
Deputy Principal: Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training	
Instructor: Commis Chef	
Teacher: Ormonde College of Further Education	
Teacher: Ormonde College of Further Education	
Tutor: Adult Literacy Services Kilkenny / RPL Support	
Recruitment Officer: Training Services	
Adult Guidance Coordinator: Carlow	
Authorised Training Officer: Contracted Training	

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)