QQI AWARD POLICIES
FOREWORD

Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

CONTEXT

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in November 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) (the 2012 Act). QQI is a national awarding body, with corresponding statutory awarding functions including, the establishment of awards standards; the approval of providers to offer programmes leading to QQI awards; validating programmes leading to QQI awards; making awards to learners; delegating authority to make awards. These policies establish an integrated quality assurance framework for the development, design, delivery and certification of awards made by QQI or made by providers with delegated authority to make awards (DA). While QQI awards policies apply to discrete statutory functions, in practice they constitute a suite of interrelated and interdependent policies designed to facilitate the effective implementation of QQI awarding responsibilities under the 2012 Act.

QQI awards are included within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This status recognises that QQI, as a national awarding body, effectively implements the NFQ. In addition to QQI core awarding functions which are rooted in the NFQ, QQI as an awarding body must implement NFQ related policies including, access, transfer and progression; the provision of information to learners; national conventions on titling of NFQ awards; the academic recognition of awards; and relevant EU and other European policies on qualifications[1].

QQI awards policies are supported by a range of procedural supports to aid their interpretation and to guide reliable implementation. These supports include guidelines, templates, glossaries and standard operating procedures. QQI will provide advice on the implementation of its awards policies, it will disseminate its policies to relevant audiences and will routinely publish administrative data on the performance of its awards.

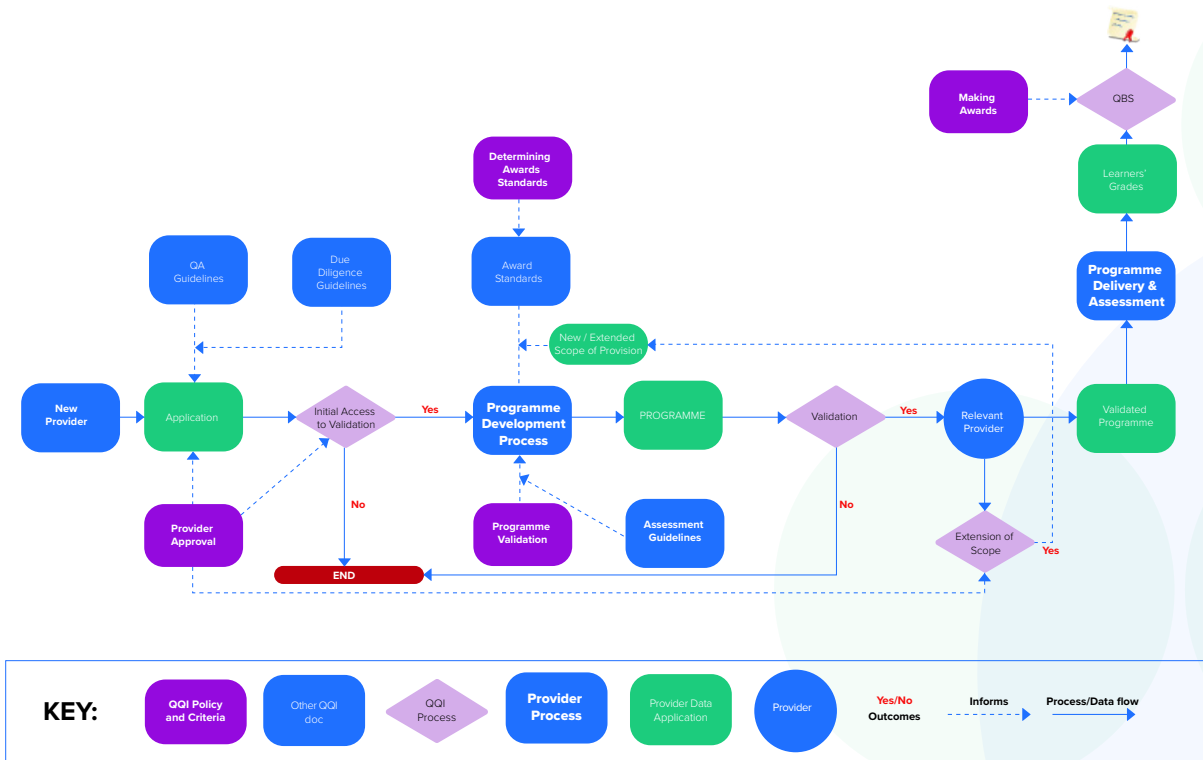## QQI AWARDING – ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

This set of QQI awarding policies set out our approach to:

1. Determining QQI Awards Standards
2. Approving providers to offer programmes leading to QQI awards
3. Validating programmes leading to QQI awards
4. Making QQI Awards

These policies are interdependent and collectively they constitute an overarching framework governing how QQI operates as an awarding body. The role of providers is central to the effectiveness of QQI as an awarding body. The reciprocal roles of QQI and providers in the development, design, delivery and certification of qualifications is shown in Figure 1.

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1   For example the European Qualifications Framework; Europass; the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System; Relevant European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in education and training.
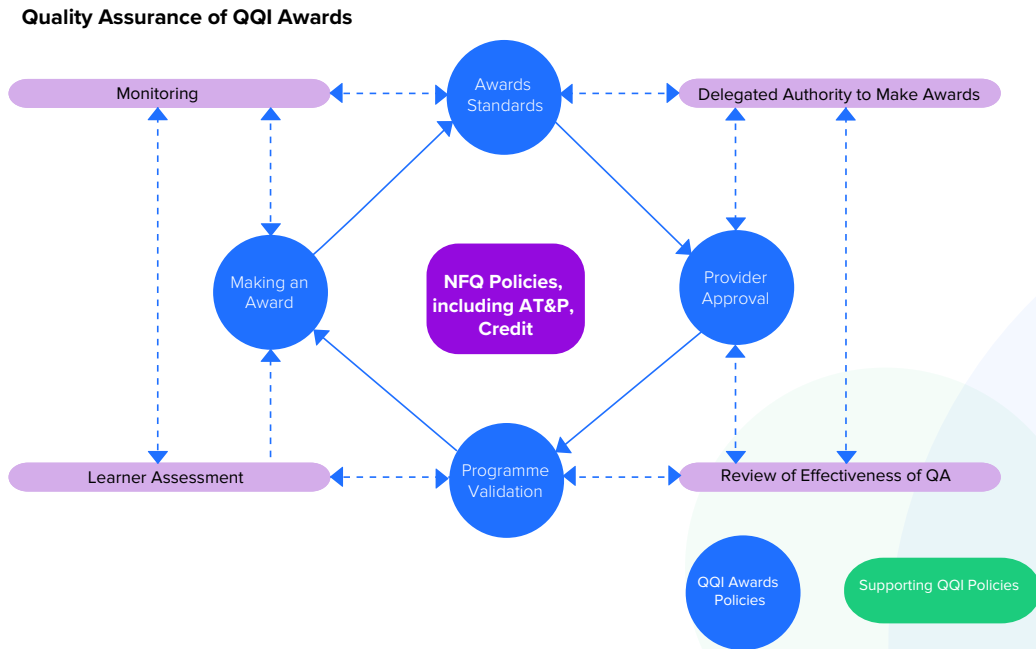
Figure 1. QQI Awarding – Roles and Responsibilities

QQI awards policies are supported and strengthened by related policies, particularly QQI policy on delegated authority to make awards; review of effectiveness of provider quality assurance; monitoring of awards and providers; and QQI guidelines on assessment.

Central to QQI as an awarding body are the policies and criteria for the implementation of the NFQ. QQI core awards policies operate within a wider statutory qualifications and quality assurance framework operated by QQI, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Quality Assurance Framework for QQI as an Awarding Body

Quality Assurance of QQI Awards

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The development, implementation and evaluation of QQI awards policies is underpinned by key principles that reflect the core values of QQI. Wherever there is doubt or ambiguity in the interpretation or application of QQI awards policy, these principles will guide decision making.

1. **Transparency –** We will engage widely with our stakeholders in the development of policies. We will make it clear how evidence was selected and used to inform the development of policies. We will ensure that we write policy that is accessible to intended audiences.

2. **Consistency –** We will ensure that our awards policies are internally consistent, mutually supporting and complementary. The development, implementation and review of awards policies will be coordinated to avoid duplication, irregularities or counterproductive effects. Where appropriate we will benchmark our awards policies against EU and relevant international norms.

3. **Proportionality –** We will constantly challenge and test the validity of assumptions underpinning the need to develop new or maintain existing awards policies. We will design policies that target their desired results. We will be smart about how we regulate and avoid creating unnecessary administrative burdens wherever possible. Policy implementation will commence with the least interventionist measures and promote greater ownership of solutions but will provide for an escalation of measures in response to actual or perceived risks.

4. **Accountability –** Our policies will make it clear who is responsible for what. Where we make statutory decisions, we will put in place independent mechanisms for dispute resolution and appeals.

5. **Subsidiarity –** We will design awards policies that facilitate decisions to be taken at the most appropriate level of responsibility. Where direct intervention by QQI is not essential, we will delegate decisions and actions on the basis of demonstrated trust and capacity.

6. **Integrity –** We will implement our awards policies to the highest ethical standards. We will strive to be impartial and independent and honest and open with all those impacted by our policies.

7. **Quality –** Our award policies will be fit for purpose, supporting the development, design, delivery, assessment, certification and recognition of qualifications, in response to learner's social and economic needs.

8. **Effectiveness –** We will foster a culture of evaluation by systematically learning about what policy choices work, how they work, for who and under what circumstances they work. We will seek to understand the capability and capacity required for the effective implementation of our awards policies. We will take appropriate action where our policies are shown to be ineffective.

AN INTEGRATED SUITE OF QQI AWARDING POLICIES

Because QQI awards policies should be understood, implemented and used in an integrated way, they are presented as four related modules in a single volume. This is intended to facilitate ease of navigation and to reinforce the progressive and interdependent nature of QQI awarding functions. The presentation of the policies is intended to mirror the cyclical and sequential order of awarding services as experienced by providers as they develop and deliver programmes leading to QQI awards. Each policy chapter follows a similar outline and a common glossary of relevant terms is included as an appendix to the suite of policies.