



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION



QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Stakeholder Collaboration Agreement between Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

1. Purpose and Scope

This Stakeholder Collaboration Agreement (SCA) between the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (hereinafter referred to as QQI) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the National Forum) sets out the role and responsibilities of the National Forum and QQI and an agreed framework for its collaboration and cooperation.

The purpose of the Agreement is to:

- i. Identify areas of cooperation and collaboration between the National Forum and QQI with respect to the enhancement of teaching and learning in the higher education sector in Ireland and the policy and other development work of QQI across further and higher education.
- ii. Facilitate enhanced engagement and cooperation between QQI and the National Forum.

This Agreement is cognisant of the vision for teaching and learning presented in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, of the key system-objective to promote excellence in teaching and learning detailed in the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020; the Action Plan for Education 2019 and the QQI Statement of Strategy 2019-2021 where collaboration and engagement with all stakeholders is a key priority in addition to analysis and impact.

This Agreement is intended to provide the framework within which joint cooperation and work can take place between QQI and the National Forum to ensure a coordinated approach to enhancement and improvement across the higher education sector, inclusive of all stakeholders. It is not intended to be exhaustive in its identification of responsibilities, nor does it in any way limit any additional areas for collaboration between the National Forum and QQI.

Both QQI and the National Forum will ensure that all relevant staff in both organisations are familiar with the Agreement and its implications, and that all dealings between the two entities are conducted in accordance with its principles and provisions.

2. Roles

The respective roles of the two entities in advancing this mission are set out overleaf.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the state agency responsible for the external quality assurance of institutions and providers in both higher and further education and training in Ireland operating within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It is also the custodian of the NFQ and makes and certifies awards. In addition, QQI is responsible for developing an International Education Mark (IEM) for education and training programmes delivered to international students, and establishing a national register of programmes (IRQ) for NFQ qualifications. QQI works in partnership with students, various agencies, higher education institutions and other stakeholders in education and training and is seeking to contribute to the work of key influencers and policy makers.

Central to the QQI's strategic development of a coherent and effective tertiary education system is collaboration and engagement. The establishment of this Agreement will enable QQI and the National Forum to build on the current synergies of their respective roles within the sector, and will contribute to QQI's further understanding of the impact of policy when it is being implemented within higher education institutions. The latter will inform further enabling policy development.

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education is the national body responsible for leading and advising on the enhancement of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. Its vision is a valued and informed teaching and learning culture in Irish higher education.

The National Forum works in partnership with the Irish higher education community through its representative bodies, policy partners and the wider student, academic and professional services communities, to enhance teaching and learning for real impact on the learning experiences and outcomes of students.

Following an initial development phase which established the National Forum as an essential component of the national-level infrastructure for higher education, the National Forum has identified four strategic priorities to December 2021:

The Professional Development of All Those Who Teach

Promoting evidence-based, flexible, inclusive professional development for all those who teach, reflecting the contextual needs and drivers within and across higher education institutions

Teaching and Learning in a Digital World

Supporting those who learn, teach and support learning to embrace and harness the potential of digital technologies with the overall goal of enhancing learning, teaching, and overall digital capability

Teaching and Learning Enhancement Within and Across Disciplines

Recognising that disciplines are a key unit of change in higher education, with a focus on disciplinary excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

Student Success

Developing a vision of success, in partnership with students, to provide all students with the opportunity to fulfil their potential and to ensure that they are professionally competent, generators of new knowledge, ethically conscious and equipped to flourish in a global world

3. Collaboration and cooperation

The promotion of excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high-quality student experience is a key system-level objective and a central challenge for the sector. QQI and the National Forum have a common mission in supporting the enhancement of the student-learning experience and sustaining public confidence in the quality of education and training. QQI is primarily responsible for maintaining the integrity of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and in promoting best practice and accountability through internal institutional and an external quality assurance system, central to which is the teaching and learning environment. The mission of the National Forum is, as a national body, to lead the enhancement of teaching and learning in partnership with students, staff and leaders in Irish higher education to develop an ethical, inclusive, collaborative and innovative culture that supports the success of all students.

Both organisations work closely with the higher education institutions and other agencies and have collaborated successfully to date. A positive outcome and a broader stakeholder reach was achieved for a number of projects for example, Assessment as of/as/for learning, the Recognition of Prior learning and the RPL network; dissemination of sectoral enhancement tools with open availability for all education and training providers. Although the commitment of QQI to work with the National Forum is explicitly included in the current QQI- HEA MOU, this partnership approach will be further strengthened by an explicit QQI-National Forum Stakeholder Collaboration Agreement (SCA).

QQI and the National Forum agree through this initial SCA to cooperate for the benefit of both parties and to work towards establishing a strategic alliance to enhance external quality assurance in teaching and learning and to improve the quality of the higher education system in Ireland. This Agreement is not intended to create legally binding relations between the parties, and neither party has the authority to act on behalf of, or otherwise bind, the other party. QQI and the National Forum agree to work together to implement this Agreement in good faith and will pursue the following objectives for their mutual benefit and with a commitment to learn from each other's processes and where possible reduce unnecessary duplication on providers and other stakeholders. Cooperation has been identified in the following areas:

a) Information Sharing

The National Forum and QQI will provide any relevant information to each other that has an impact on their respective roles and functions in a timely manner.

b) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Work to promote and enhance the national agenda around the recognition of prior learning through the development of open access professional development short courses (leading to a National Forum Digital Badge) (1) to build understanding of RPL within the sector. (2) To inform the development of enabling RPL policies and share good practice across institutions.

c) Developing and building sectoral understanding of work-based assessment

This activity will support:

- Sharing good practice nationally and internationally
- Identifying the various types of work placement and approaches to the assessment of work based learning across the sector
- Providing opportunities for discussion and review of assessment of, for and as learning in the context of work-based assessment, to highlight the key issues and explore solutions
- Building sectoral understanding and capability around work-based assessment to act as a platform for future enhancement
- the design and delivery of two initial webinars on work-based assessment and the development of a national seminar on work-based assessment, to be delivered in November 2020.

d) Building understanding of National Standards

QQI will set up a working group to develop the content for a professional development short course (25 hours) leading to a National Forum endorsed digital badge and an associated facilitator's programme. The development process will be supported by the National Forum. The course will be aimed at new staff to provide them with an understanding of the national standards which guide their work. The associated facilitator's course will also provide opportunities for individuals to gain a facilitator's digital badge to enable them to run the course in their own contexts. The 'Getting Started with National Standards' course will be developed for delivery in F2F, Online and Self-study modes.

e) Collaborate on Other areas

QQI and the National Forum will continue to collaborate in relation to mutually agreed projects and activities not limited to those referenced in this agreement, for the benefit of both parties. Where appropriate and possible, support the development of staff from both parties through activities such as staff exchange, observing each other's engagements and processes, and the provision of training.

4. Communication and Liaison Arrangements

All communication regarding this Agreement and associated secondment will be through Karena Maguire, Head of Stakeholder Engagement (QQI) and Terry Maguire, Director (National Forum).

5. Business Planning and Reporting Arrangements

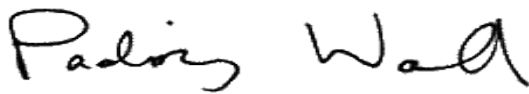
Biannual planning and update meetings with National Forum Executive and QQI staff.

Sign off and review process

This Agreement is jointly signed by the Chief Executive Officer of QQI and the Director of the National Forum and it takes effect from January 1st 2020 and is valid until December 2021.

This Agreement will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. It will be fully reviewed at the end of its first year of operation. It may be modified or extended by mutual written agreement. All changes to this Agreement will be ratified by the Board of the National Forum and by the HEA Policy and Planning Standing Committee.

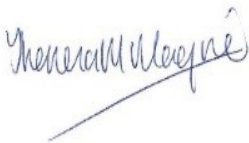
Signed on behalf of the QQI:



Dr. Pádraig Walsh
Chief Executive

Date: 18 May 2020

Signed of behalf of the National Forum:



Dr. Terry Maguire
Director

Date: 18 May 2020