

ETBI QQI Collaborative FET Forum Communiqué Number 2

ETBI is pleased to welcome you to the second communiqué of the ETBI QQI Collaborative FET Forum. The purpose of this communiqué is to provide an update to those working in the area of FET in the ETBs on the progress being made by the FET forum and includes information on developments from January 2015 to March 2015.

Towards a Quality Assurance Framework for Education and Training Boards: Draft Quality Assurance Guidelines

In October 2014 QQI circulated the draft QA guidelines for the ETB sector to the FET forum members. QQI then conducted a feasibility study to test the appropriateness of these draft guidelines and to identify ways in which they may be improved. Three ETBs, namely CMETB, LCETB and LMETB, participated in the feasibility study and were visited by an external panel of three advisors accompanied by QQI staff in January 2015. The external advisory panel then produced a report outlining the relevant issues raised during the conduct of the feasibility study, together with recommendations to QQI on the draft QA guidelines. This report was circulated to the forum members in March 2015. Chief Executives and Executive Officers from the ETBs, together with forum members, were also invited to a presentation delivered by the external advisory panel on the 10th March in ETBI Head Office, Piper's Hill, Naas.

In addition to this, CDET, CETB, GRETB and LOETB participated in a parallel consultative process and were visited by a team from QQI in January and February. All ETBs were also facilitated to feed back on the draft QA guidelines via an on-line survey.

QQI is currently considering the external advisory panel report, the findings from the parallel consultative process and the feedback recorded through the on-line survey, with the intention of reviewing the draft guidelines. Following this, the revised QA guidelines will be presented to the forum members, hopefully in April 2015. The forum will then consult with the sector on the revised guidelines.

Representation of ETBs on QQI working groups

On occasion representatives from QQI have made presentations to the forum members on areas of activity in which they are currently engaged. In some cases QQI has requested the involvement of ETB personnel in these areas. This has resulted in ETB forum members nominating participants to working groups focussed on the following:

- Reviewing award standards at levels 1-3 in vocationally orientated fields where QQI identified gaps in available expertise:
 - Science, Horticulture and Agriculture
 - Hospitality and Personal Services
 - Retail, Administration and Office Work
 - Care and Community Work
- Identifying and prioritising awards at levels 4 – 6 in need of review. This working group has also been tasked with considering how the ETB sector will consult on the proposals for the development of new QQI awards or the review of existing awards within the sector, prior to these proposals being presented to QQI.

In addition to the above, QQI is also preparing a briefing note for the ETBs to allow forum members to seek a nomination from each ETB to participate on a QQI working group to explore employer engagement and entrepreneurship.

The External Authenticator Pilot

KCETB, KWTB, LMETB and WWETB, with the agreement of QQI, are in the process of undertaking a pilot to identify, train and use a select pool of external authenticators, in specific award areas. Three information sessions took place in late February for prospective external authenticators, followed by a day's training in March 2015. A pool of external authenticators in the areas of Agriculture, Art Craft and Design, General Learning, Graphic Design, Hairdressing, Horticulture, Horsemanship, Music, Multimedia Production, Nursing Studies, Photography, Retail and Administration, Sports Recreation and Exercise and Tourism with Business will now be established and will be available to the four participating ETBs for the June certification period and beyond. It is envisaged that this pilot could be replicated in other ETBs on a regional basis in the future.

External Appeals Process

CDETБ and CETB will no longer be facilitating the learner appeals process for the ETB sector. With immediate effect, ETBs will now be implementing their own appeals process to facilitate learners wishing to appeal their result or the assessment process. CDETБ and CETB will liaise with QQI in sharing information on best practice and supporting documentation to support the ETBs implementing a local appeals process for the first time.

ETB Training Centres and QQI Operational Issues

A number of issues have arisen regarding the visibility and availability of programmes, which may be classed as former VEC programmes or former FAS programmes, across an ETB's provision. In order to discuss these issues, a meeting was held in February 2015 where representatives from QQI and the ETBs, including Training Standards Officers (TSOs) were in attendance. It was agreed that in some cases it is necessary for QQI to enter into discussions with SOLAS to agree a solution to technical issues. QQI has now agreed with ETBs how training centres may offer programmes that were previously validated for use in a former VEC college/centre.

Update on the Work Plan of the Forum

The ETBI QQI FET Collaborative Forum has a work plan setting out key topics and activities for the period November 2014 – April 2015. This work plan is regularly updated. At this time a number of actions are complete and modifications or additions have been made to others. The most up to date version of the work plan can be accessed on the ETBI website at the following link: <http://www.etbi.ie/quality-assurance/>.

Communications

This FET forum has recognised the importance of communicating with FET staff in the ETBs to keep them informed of developments. To this end, information and updates on the work of the Forum are posted on the ETBI website at <http://www.etbi.ie/quality-assurance/>