

# QQI Review Report 2021

Inaugural Review  
of Waterford and Wexford Education and Training  
Board



QQI REVIEW

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# Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that providers have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI conducts external reviews of providers of further and higher education and training on a cyclical basis. QQI is currently conducting the inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards. Cyclical review is an element of the broader quality framework for ETBs composed of: statutory quality assurance guidelines; quality assurance approval; annual quality reporting; dialogue meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; validation of programmes; and, most crucially, the quality assurance system established by each ETB. The inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards runs from 2020-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the sixteen education and training boards. On conclusion of the sixteen reviews, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying system-level observations and findings.

The inaugural review evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each ETB with a particular focus on the arrangements for the governance and management of quality; teaching, learning and assessment; and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. These are considered in the context of the expectations set out in the relevant QQI statutory quality assurance guidelines and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures.

The review methodology is based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to review:

- a self-evaluation conducted by the provider, resulting in the production of a self-evaluation report;
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers (due to the government's restrictions due to COVID-19, the review team completed a virtual visit);
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This inaugural virtual review of Waterford & Wexford 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 Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board was conducted by a 6-person review team selected by QQI. The review team attended a virtual briefing and training session with QQI staff on 20 September 2021 and the virtual planning visit to Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board took place on 30 September 2021. The main virtual review was conducted by the full team via Microsoft Teams between 15 and 19 November 2021.

## **Chair: Professor Conor Moss**

Conor Moss is Professor of Work-Based Learning at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). He is an accomplished academic with over 20 years' experience across further and higher education, having started his academic career specialising in strategic management, leadership, and organisational development. Conor has extensive experience developing successful educational partnerships with a range of global and national employers. Conor is Group Director of a large service encompassing graduate employability, business engagement and academic collaborative partnerships. He is also Dean of Work-Based Learning focusing on academic practice for employability and degree apprenticeships. Conor has led the development of new business facing service at two institutions including the rapid growth of degree apprenticeships, CPD and employer-led provision at SHU.

## **Coordinating Reviewer: Deirdre Hanamy**

Deirdre Hanamy is former Principal of Blackrock Further Education Institute (BFEI) which is a constituent college of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). She has 35 years of experience working in the FET sector which includes teaching in, managing, and leading a large FET college. She currently works, in a part-time capacity, at the National College of Ireland (NCI) as a placement tutor on the Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education (PGDEP) programme. She is a committee member of FET Colleges Ireland (FETCI), the voice of FET College Leaders, a committee of NAPD (National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals). She recently completed a Level 9 Professional Certificate in Governance from the Institute of Public Administration, a Level 9 Post-Graduate Certificate in Programme Design and Validation from Maynooth University and External Authentication training from ETBI (Education Training Boards Ireland).

## **Learner Representative: Daniel Kenny**

Daniel Kenny is a young adult learner based in Courtown, Co. Wexford. His further education journey started in 2018 with a pathway to employment training course in Courtown, Co Wexford. Daniel learned some real-life skills as well as educational skills, as well as to always try to be the best he can be and to never accept limits. During his time in Courtown, he did a lot of volunteering with children's youth clubs and summer camps. This gave him a real love of working with the public. When he completed his course, he began a QQI level 5 Sports and Recreation course in Gorey. This again taught him that his true calling was to work with the public and help others in any way that he could. He continued to volunteer with the youth clubs and camps. He also began to coach children's sports and felt a real sense of pride helping children learn something new.

## **Peer Expert: Dr Giorgio Allulli**

Dr Giorgio Allulli is currently working as an independent expert, supporting many European and Italian organizations and EQAVET (the European network for VET Quality assurance). His prevalent professional interest is the evaluation of education and training systems. He is a member of the scientific boards of many educational magazines and author of many books and articles on this topic. He has been:

- Research director in ISFOL (the Italian National Agency for VET)
- Director of Italian University Chancellors Conference
- Coordinator of the Italian National Reference Point on VET Quality Assurance
- Vice Chairperson and member of the steering committee of EQAVET
- Professor of European Training Policies for Human Resources at Rome University (Faculty of Sociology).
- Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office on the integration of education and training systems
- Consultant to the main national and international institutions (Italian Parliament, OECD, CEDEFOP, etc.).

## **Peer Expert: Susan Sweeney**

Susan Sweeney holds an MSc in Technology and Education from Trinity College Dublin and is a pioneer of education technology in Ireland. Her career began in University College Dublin as part of the team that developed a pioneering virtual classroom project hosted with the International Telecom Satellite Organisation (INTELSAT) and the faculty of Engineering in the University of Jordan in Amman. Susan developed her practice in the application of technology in education in technical roles

in Maynooth University and Technological University Dublin. As part of her thesis research, she developed a novel alternative notation software system for teaching music to novice students and her findings were presented at the Ed Tech conference in the National College of Ireland. Susan is involved with research in visual literacy, virtual reality, and augmented reality experimental design. Her latest published paper is Project #CyborgArt: A teaching case study on the affordances programmable sensors in mixed media art projects. Susan developed her entrepreneurial flair in the delivery of media productions for companies including Microsoft, Ireland. Susan lectures across the Faculty of Arts, Business, and Data Science.

## **Industry Representative: Laurence Mackey**

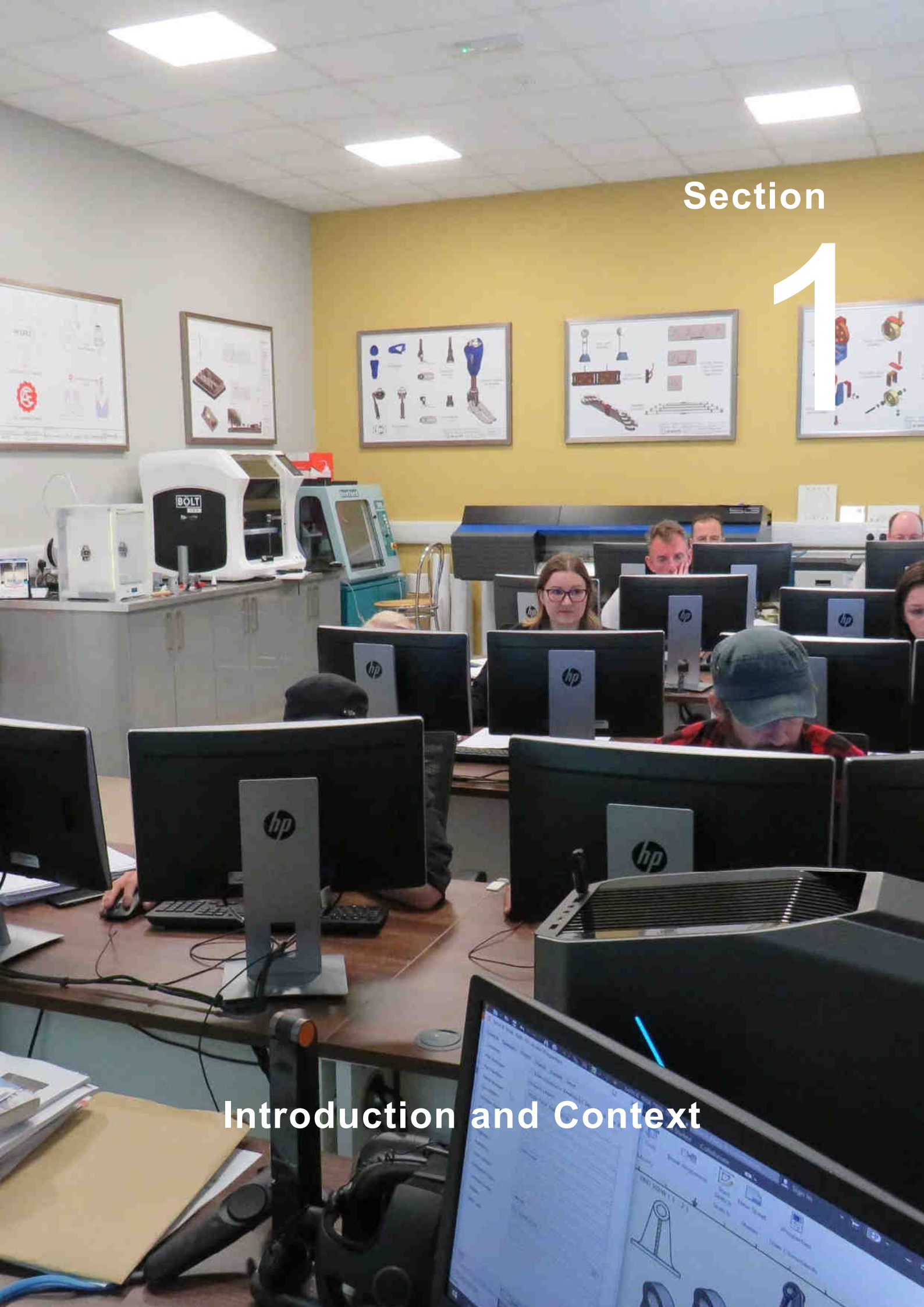
Laurence Mackey has held positions across many industries including telecoms, healthcare, luxury goods and consulting. His main areas of interest are in supply chain, IT and general management. Laurence holds a B. Sc (Applied Computing), an M. Sc. (Supply Chain Management) and a Diploma in Engineering (Electronics). As Head of Procurement at Waterford Wedgwood, Laurence was responsible for the supply of all raw materials and services with a spend portfolio of €125M per annum. His role in healthcare was as the commercial director of a private hospital in Dublin; in this role, he held responsibility for the operations of all non-clinical services and Quality/Risk Management (QRM). In his current role, Laurence is Chief Operations Officer (COO) of an Irish owned telecoms company with manufacturing in Co. Laois. Alpha Wireless supplies customised antenna solutions to the domestic and international markets. Alpha Wireless has many blue-chip companies as clients – including BT, Ericsson, and Nokia. He has a special interest in the SME sector and particularly how SMEs can learn from their larger counterparts and multi-nationals.



Section

1

Introduction and Context



# Section 1: Introduction and Context

## Introduction and Context for the Review

Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) was established on 1 July 2013, as an amalgamation of City of Waterford VEC, County Waterford VEC and Wexford VEC. Subsequently, on 1 January 2014, WWETB officially welcomed the addition of Waterford and Wexford Training Centres (formerly the FÁS/SOLAS Training Centres), to its range of services.

WWETB provides a comprehensive range of education and training services throughout Waterford and Wexford and is the largest education and training provider in counties Waterford and Wexford. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 8) that geographically, the counties of Waterford and Wexford account for about 6% of the area of the Republic of Ireland and their combined population accounts for approximately 6% of the nation's total. Their combined population in 2016 was 265,898 with Waterford at 116,176 and Wexford at 149,722. The population of the South-East rose by nearly 6% between 2011 and 2016 with further population growth expected to show in the next census.

Its services include Post-Primary & Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Education, Adult Education Centres, Youthreach Centres, Outdoor Education & Training Centres, Further Education & Training Centres, Administration Centres, Local Training Initiatives, Community Training Centres, Adult Education, Specialist Training Providers, Community Schools (where WWETB are joint patrons) and Community National Schools as summarised visually in the diagram below which is taken from WWETB's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) (p. 9).





## Vision and Mission

The vision of WWETB, as defined in its Statement of Strategy 2018-20221, “aims to lead learning through the delivery of high quality, inclusive, responsive, and innovative education and training services in our community.”

The mission of WWETB, as defined in its Statement of Strategy 2018-2022, is “to provide a wide range of education and training programmes, services and supports for children, young people and adults across the Waterford Wexford region.”

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by WWETB detailed the core values of the organisation as:

- Respect
- Accountability
- Learner Focus
- Quality

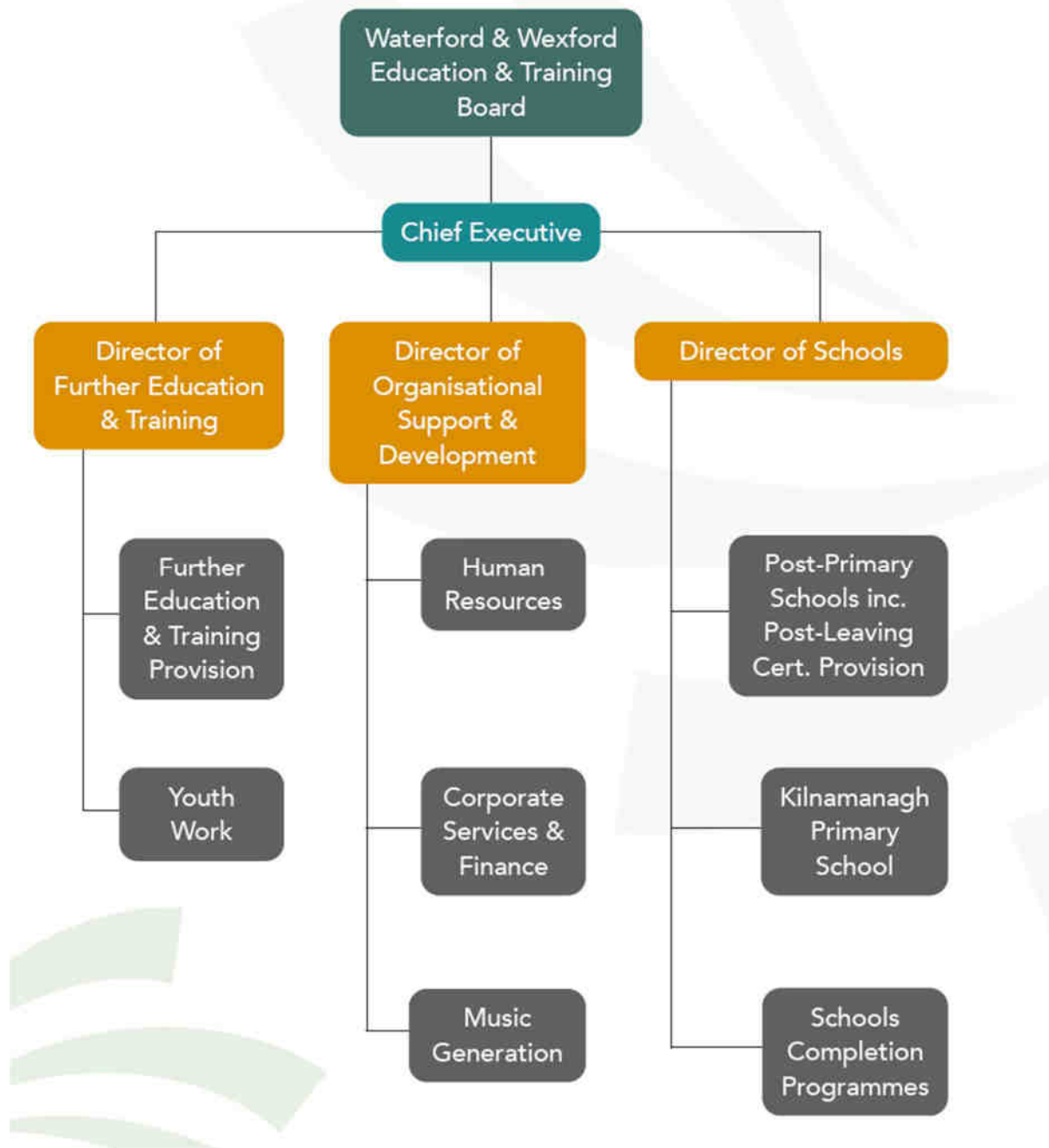
The SER and Provider profile also detailed 5 strategic goals and priorities for 2018-2022 with associate actions, specifically:

- To provide high quality education and training programmes for our students and learners.
- Development of Organisation Services
- Our people working together
- To foster and develop lasting partnerships and collaborations
- To develop effective internal and external communication

## Operational Structure of WWETB

As set out in the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board is a local statutory, education and training authority. WWETB is governed by a board comprising twenty-one members. This includes twelve representatives from the local City and County Councils of Waterford and Wexford; two members elected from staff; two parent/guardian representatives; and five members with a special knowledge of education and training including a learner representative and a business representative.

The diagram below, which is taken from the WWETB's Provider Profile, (p.10) outlines the current organisational structure.



The work of the organisation is further supported by boards of management in each of WWETB's thirteen colleges. In accordance with the reserved functions set out under Section 12(i) of the Act, WWETB has established a number of Committees to support its work. The committees include:

- Finance Committee
- Audit Committee
- Youth Work Committee
- Youthreach Committee
- Three Area Committees: Waterford City & County, South Wexford, North Wexford

## Learner and Staff Summary

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 14) that in 2020 WWETB delivered almost 2,000 individual courses to 15,387 FET learners. This learner figure was down from a total of 18,840 in 2019 and was explained in the SER as being largely due to a decrease in applications for placements due to the COVID-19 crisis.

FET learners achieved 9,282 QQI awards and many more awards from other awarding bodies including City & Guilds, ITEC and CIBTAC. Even with their reduced enrolments their QQI awards rose slightly from a figure of 9,217 in 2019.

WWETB has 795 FET staff including 600 Learning Practitioners. It has 29 Further Education and Training Centres, one dedicated Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) College, five dual provision schools offering FET courses and a total yearly budget of €66,500,000 for 2020.

## Approach to Quality Assurance

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 15) that “Post-amalgamation WWETB inherited seven separate legacy provider QA agreements across the two counties’ further education and training provision. WWETB continues to work towards one overarching Quality Assurance Framework, with consistency at policy level, consistency at procedural level where possible but with different procedures at programme level as required”.

In 2016 WWETB made the early decision to amalgamate Further Education Quality Assurance with their Training Standards Unit creating one central Quality Assurance (QA) Team. The QA Team has grown to 13 dedicated staff members supporting all areas of FET provision, including a dedicated Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) Coordinator and Data Analyst.

WWETB’s QA system is guided by the eleven areas of QQI’s Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), along with QQI’s Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards and Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes (2016). In 2018 WWETB completed its re-engagement process with QQI, leading to one formal QA agreement with QQI and the lapse of the seven legacy agreements.

WWETB is also required to meet the QA requirements of other awarding bodies whose awards they offer such as City and Guilds, ITEC, CIBTAC etc. The review team heard that the development of their QA system is broadly guided by the EQAVET Quality Cycle and that WWETB are actively investigating data-based quality indicators as a means to further review and inform their practices.

## Relevant Contextual Factors

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 23) that the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on how WWETB has operated since March 2020. A significant number of programmes moved to Emergency Remote Teaching Learning and Assessment (ERTLA), with many learners who had joined programmes in September 2020 having only experienced ERTLA practices.

The SER also outlined (p. 23) how the QA team mobilised their QA structures to develop and implement extensive contingency plans in collaboration with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) & Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to make many award and programme-level modifications, adaptations and to ensure WWETB's Quality Assurance (QA) governance structures were delivered on all programmes to the same quality. The SER (p. 96) outlines how an emergency budget was procured and used with the ETB's own additional budget and processes to support the migration from a service that focalises around centres of education and training to a remote service for nearly 800 FET staff and 6000 FET learners. The additional funding allowed for the purchase of 1460 laptops within the latter part of 2020, dealing with a significant increase in IT helpdesk calls and having a designated person in each centre facilitating the formalisation on how work experience placements could proceed. During the review team meetings with practitioners, and learners, the oral feedback also confirmed that when things were changing rapidly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff really appreciated having access to WWETB's digital resources which includes online CPD programmes and the learners spoke about how WWETB had provided them with the necessary supports, including the provision of laptops. In some cases, additional IT training and support was provided to suit the learner cohort.



Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

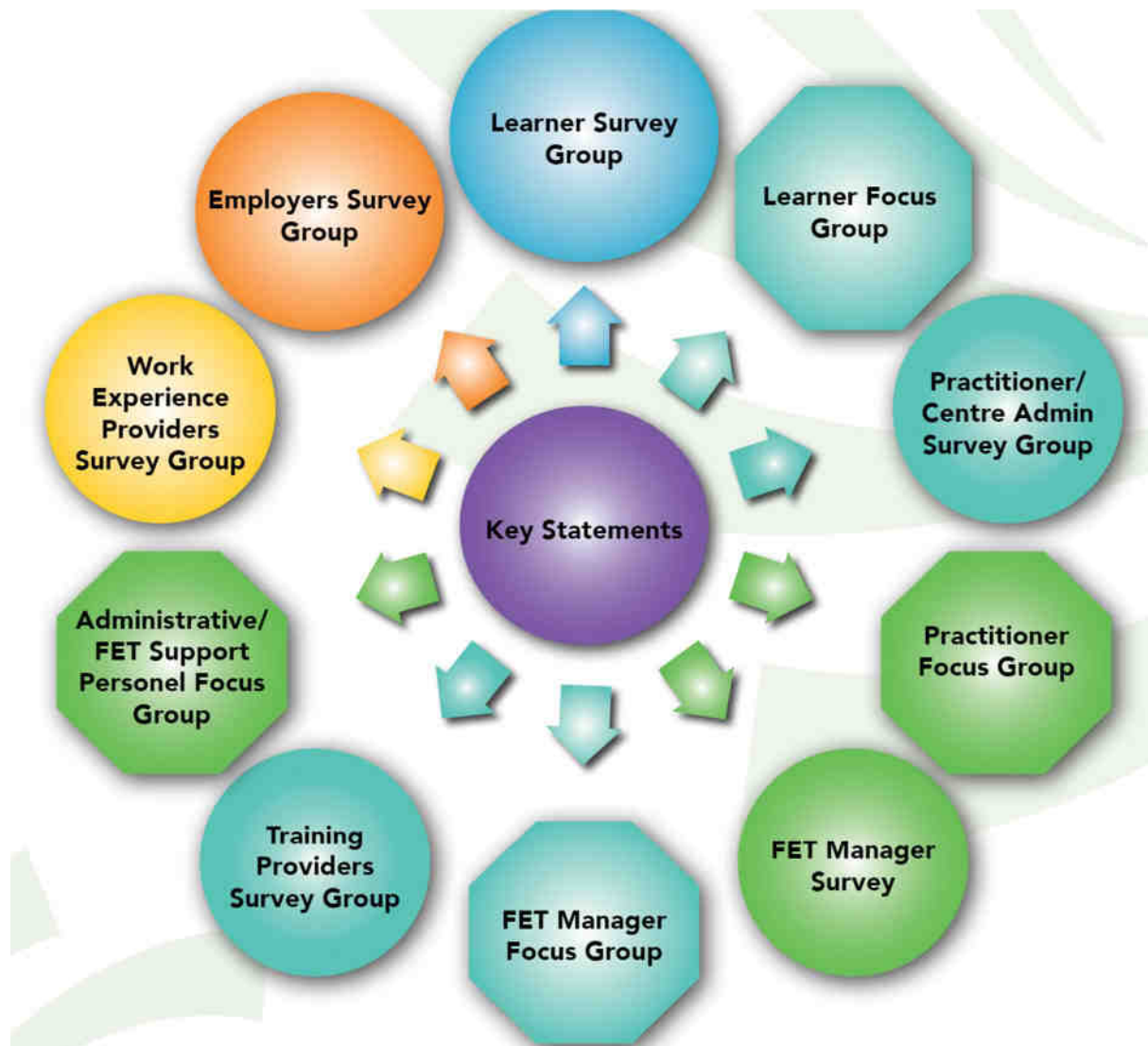


# Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

## The Self-Evaluation Process

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 17) that WWETB established a Self-Evaluation Steering Group (SESG) with reference to guidance from QQI's review handbook. The steering group comprised of a cross-section of WWETB staff, including support services, QA and teaching. There were two external representatives on the steering group, one from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) and an employer representative. The SESG met six times in total over a period of 6 months, prior to formal approval of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The SER included comprehensive Appendices, including the SESG Terms of Reference and the review team had access to supporting documentation before and during the main review.

During the main review visit, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and representatives from the SESG outlined the review methodology and the approach to the collection of data, documentation and consultation to provide an evidence base against which they made their judgement. A gap analysis model which enabled the SESG to make key statements on areas of strength and areas for improvement. The SESG team planned to use these key statements during consultation events with a range of stakeholder groups, however COVID-19 necessitated a change to fully remote and virtual operations. The revised process included a range of surveys for internal and external stakeholders and the use of internal focus groups. Six key stakeholder survey groups and four stakeholder focus groups were established in order to carry out remote consultation, as illustrated in the diagram below which is taken from the SER (p. 20).



**Figure G: Self-Evaluation Consultation Groups**

The SER states (p. 21) that the survey questions associated with each section of the review were then developed to investigate whether key statements could be supported – the premise being, that if they could support these statements by either data, documentation, or positive consultation results, it could be asserted with confidence that these were areas of good practice based on evidence. Statements that were more difficult to support with one or more of the three forms of evidence reflected areas that potentially contain gaps in terms of formalisation or areas requiring improvement in some way.

The SER then continued to outline on completion of the stakeholder review process, that an initial draft of the SER was produced and following this draft further consultation commenced with WWETB's support functions who have responsibility for specific sections of the SER not under the direct governance of the Quality Team i.e., HR, Learner Support, Contracted and Community

Training. A second draft was then developed for final consultation before signing off by the SESG and onwards through the established Governance structures i.e. the QA Steering Group, the Further Education and Training (FET) Management Team, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Chief Executive (CE).

The review team tested this methodology with both the SMT and the SESG during the main review visit and they recognised and commended the professional approach to a significant undertaking. WWETB engaged fully and positively with the review team at all stages of the process, the team were open and honest in their areas for development and welcomed constructive and challenging discussion on all areas under review. This included extensive discussions on the use of data to inform strategic decision making and oversight of quality assurance. The review team tested the validity of the survey methodology with a particular emphasis on proportionate representation of stakeholder voices; the review team noted the relatively limited external responses, from a cross section of employers.

The review team find the SER to be a comprehensive document, and that WWETB used the QQI framework and guidance to inform the structure and content of the final report. Their established QA governance and oversight structures helped the self-evaluation team to quickly establish and agree the methodology for the self-evaluation and the approval of the final report.

The review team agrees that the SER includes useful contextual information, particularly on the organisation and its strategic priorities and ambitions, how it is structured, and some background on the region that it serves. The SER also includes a specific statement on how WWETB utilised the quality assurance systems to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The use of data within the SER was largely limited to the results from the surveys. The review team discussed data on a number of occasions and noted the SER would have been enhanced by appropriate performance data relating to learner retention, progression and certification.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends the WWETB's commitment to quality improvement through identifying effective practice, challenges, and potential future enhancement in each subsection of the report.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB develop a detailed action plan that clearly identifies the 'action owners' with realistic timelines. This is particularly relevant for some of the

more significant actions identified in the SER which will require major investment and additional resources.



Section

# 3

Quality Assurance & Enhancement



# Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

## Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

### ETB Mission & Strategy

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 25) “the manner in which WWETB as an organisation carries out its fundamental responsibilities finds its foundations in the carefully considered organisational Vision and Mission statements. Both are robust and appropriately connotative of the main values of the organisation. WWETB Strategy Statement 2018-2022 set down the organisation key aims, and goals aligned with achieving the organisational vision and mission. The Strategy Statement is a culmination of almost a year of consultation across a wide group of stakeholders including staff, parents/guardians, learners, Board of Managements, Board members, local and national statutory bodies, industry, business representatives and other educational partners. The annual Service Plan details the yearly framework and context for the realisation of the Statement Strategy. Strategic goals are aligned with national policies such as the Department of Education Action Plan for Education Framework 2016-2019 and the associated annual plans, SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 and the SOLAS Corporate Plan 2017-2019”.

The Chief Executive (CE) has overall day-to-day responsibility for the oversight of all WWETB activity. The Director of Further Education and Training, the Director of Organisational Support and Development and the Director of Schools all report to the CE in terms of the Governance Structure. A number of Committees – Audit & Risk, Finance, Youth Work Committee, Area Committees and the Youthreach Committee also report to the CE in accordance with the ETB Act (2013).

The mission of WWETB, as defined in its Statement of Strategy 2018-2022<sup>2</sup>, is “to provide a wide range of education and training programmes, services and supports for children, young people and adults across the Waterford Wexford region.”

This mission statement is clear and practical, however, in the opinion of the review team, it potentially lacks ambition and focus to drive a large organisation of this size, offering a diverse range of FET educational provision and with a commitment to developing the key pillars of the Strategy Statement 2018-2022 which are to: -

- Provide high quality education and training programmes for our students and learners
- Development of Organisational Services
- Our people working together
- To foster and develop lasting partnerships and collaborations

- To develop effective internal and external communications

The SER states (p. 26) “the Quality Assurance Team conducted a ‘Mapping’ which demonstrates a high level of congruence between WWETB’s Strategy Statement and the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines (2016) and this illustrates that the strategy elements that serve as the propellant for WWETB FET provision are in line with the guidelines for providers as set down by QQI Guidelines”. This self-directed validation of their own work demonstrates WWETB’s maturity in relation to the use of its Quality Assurance Team.

The Annual Service Plan is developed to support the implementation of the WWETB Strategy Statement 2018– 2022. The development of this plan is completed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in conjunction with the Principals, FET Managers, Communications Steering Group and the Operations Team. The review team found no evidence regarding the role of the QA Team in the generation of the Service Plan for 2021. However, it is clear that the QA team inputted to the generation of these plans based on the Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and their operational expertise. The Board signoff of these annual service plans provides the key linkage between the strategic and operational levels in the organisation. In effect, these approved plans become the vehicle to meet the targets set out in the Strategic Performance Agreement (2018-2022) between SOLAS and the WWETB on an annual basis. Even though the review team found no specific reference to key performance indicators (KPIs), additional information provided to the review team showed evidence of a monitoring and review process for these plans. The review team is keen to emphasise the value and importance of setting benchmarks which would serve as performance indicators.

The review team believe that the implementation of the mission statement message across all service provision to include further education colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers and collaborative partnerships/arrangements was evident, with particular points of strength recognised. Firstly, the willingness of people to work together and secondly, the presence of effective communications throughout the WWETB microcosm both internally and externally. However, the review team noted, as stated in the SER (p. 26), this awareness diminished somewhat among their training partner providers where 11% of respondents felt that they were not aware of the main values of the organisation. The review team also noted that the SER (p. 27) acknowledges that WWETB’s aspirations to achieve Quality, Inclusivity, Responsiveness & Innovation are ongoing objectives that the organisation continues to integrate across the FET service provision.

### **Commendation**

- The review team commends WWETB’s progress in terms of bringing together a wide variety of service providers and associated support staff whilst gaining the respect and authority of those involved to allow the ongoing development of WWETB educational provision.

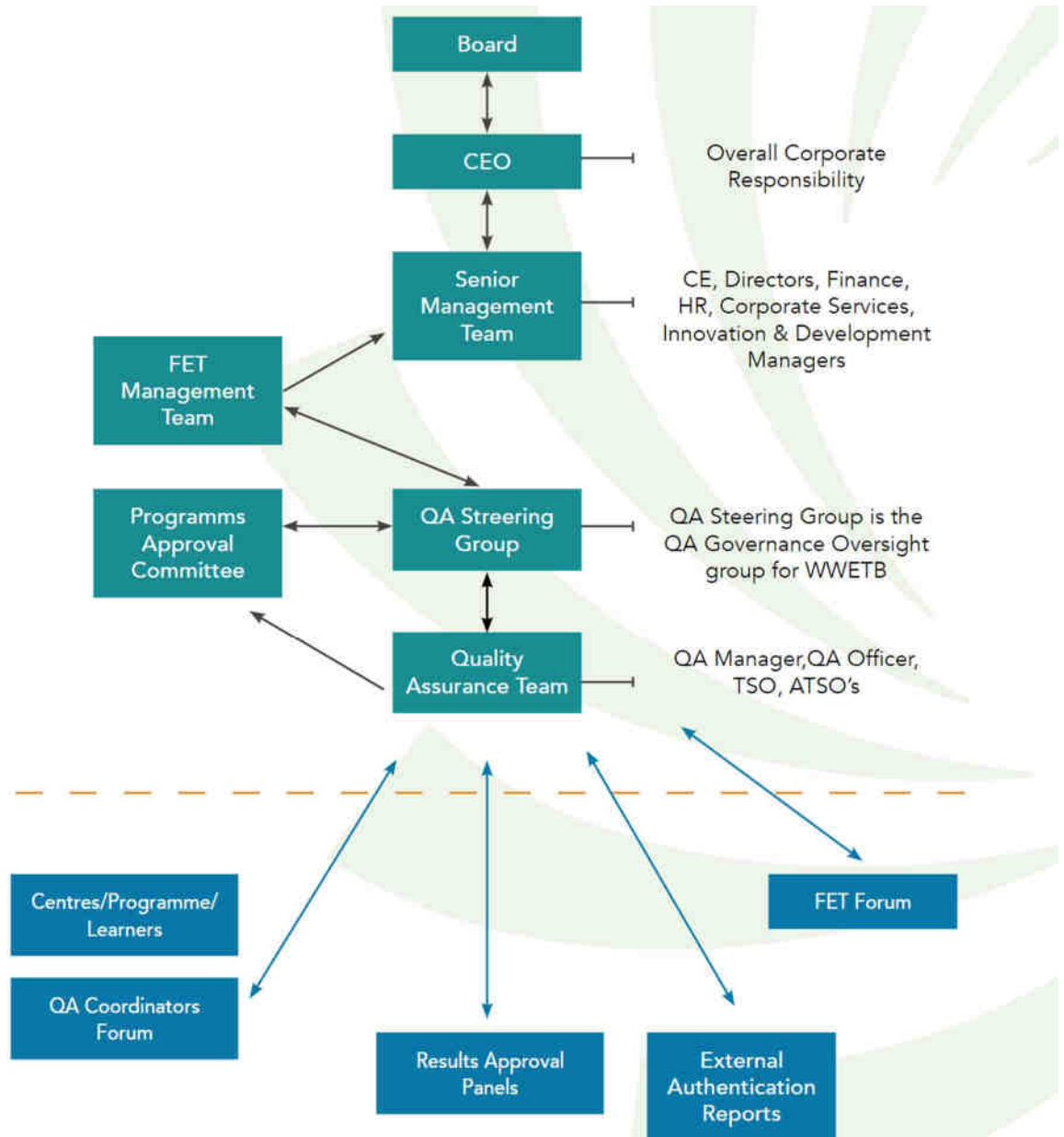
### **Recommendations**

- The review team recommends that WWETB review and update the mission statement to ensure it fully reflects the key pillars of their next Strategy Statement 2023-2027.
- The review team recommends that WWETB establish key performance metrics to enhance future annual service plans.
- The review team recommends that WWETB develop a new method of engagement with stakeholders (internal and external) to further enhance its capacity to identify emerging needs and to develop services to address same.

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

As set out in the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board is a local statutory, education and training authority and they have established formal and clearly defined structures of governance as explained on page 10 and 11 of this report.

The diagram below, which is taken from the SER (p. 35) further outlines WWETB’s Further Education and Training (FET) Governance Structure which includes, the FET Management Team, a QA Steering Group, a Programmes Approval Committee, the QA Team, a QA Coordinators Forum and a FET Forum.



**Figure 2.3: WWETB QA Governance Structure**

The Self-Evaluation Report further states (p.36) that these sub-committees have specific responsibility for the oversight of specific functions of ETB business to mitigate risk and the prospect of any activity which may be construed as fraudulent in nature.



The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) demonstrates that the WWETB have invested a significant amount of time and resources to build an overarching governance and management framework of quality assurance and that this work has been ongoing since 2013 and the SER states (p.16) “WWETB is committed to ongoing, monitoring, evaluation development and improvement of their QA System. Annual Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and Status Reports are submitted to QQI and WWETB engage in annual dialogue meeting with QQI to review progress. The combination of the re-engagement, executive self-evaluation report, annual QIP’s monitoring and review, and the external review process provides the external dimensions to our quality system”.

The review team is satisfied that WWETB have well established arrangements in place to support the operation of their quality assurance system. The team also note that there are other overarching government policies, regulations and guidelines such as the Skills Strategy Statement 2016-2019<sup>3</sup>, the Teaching Council of Ireland Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers<sup>4</sup> and the Office of Government Procurement framework agreements and contracts<sup>5</sup> that are legally binding and well established that enhance the implementation of QQI’s Core and Specific QA guidelines at organisational and centre level within the ETB.

During the review meetings, the review team explored the placement, responsibility, and accountability of the quality assurance function across the organisation. The review team is keen to note that the evidence presented supported the view that QA is a well-defined operational function within the organisation, understood and appreciated by all internal and external stakeholders. The team heard of the valuable operational support provided by the QA function to centres. However, there was limited evidence that demonstrated the impact of the QA function in terms of enhancement and development of quality and in supporting strategic level organisational development. It is the opinion of the review team that while that operational function is well established, based on the size of the organisation and the diversity of provision, the overarching QA function needs to operate at a higher executive and leadership level in the ETB to support strategic development of the ETB. The ETB needs to further develop its QA framework to ensure that QA permeates at all levels of the organisation, for example, taking a wider scope when defining quality assurance governance and oversight structures and the re-assignment of QA roles and responsibility to enhance this wider scope.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends WWETB inclusion of a Quality Team in the revised Governance and Oversight structures, who are working systematically to develop and embed an overarching QA Framework to support the provision of a diverse range of quality assured educational programmes across all service provision.

## **Recommendation**

- The review team recommend that WWETB take a more strategic approach to quality assurance. Based on the size of the organisation and the diversity of provision, the QA overarching function needs to operate at a higher executive level and be integrated within the senior management strategic planning and monitoring process.

## **Documentation of Quality Assurance**

The Self-Evaluation Report states (p.39) “WWETB have worked systematically over the past years to develop the policy and procedure documents that feed into a standardised quality assurance system for the organisation. Priority on this regard has been given to areas of greatest need and area where there was inherent commonality or least complexity. This work is ongoing and as such some elements of legacy system are still part of the QA system as it exists today but only where these elements were functional and in line with WWETB’s Quality Framework and the QQI core Guidelines”.

The review team note the establishment of a Microsoft SharePoint site as a very good QA initiative; it contains key QA documents including policies, procedures, guidelines, as well as templates and a space for practitioners to share resources. During the review team meetings with practitioners, the oral feedback confirmed that this is a significant digital QA resource that they find very useful. It was noted, in particular when things were changing rapidly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this digital resource which includes online CPD for staff was invaluable to the point where second provider staff who are not directly considered ETB staff were keen to request that they could be given direct access to this site.

The Self-Evaluation Report states (p.40) while WWETB’s QA system could be described as a hybrid of legacy agreements and newly developed policy and procedures, great effort has been made to ensure that the organisation’s QA procedures are understood and functioning in a cohesive and standardised manner across the organisation. Training Standards personnel and Further Education QA personnel work side by side as a cohesive quality unit with a designated Quality Manager. The review team heard that the QA team work collaboratively to ensure that the organisation’s QA objectives are met and QA review process such as the Quality Improvement Plan are reflective of the overarching unity of approach in terms of Further Education and Training. The QA team endeavours to be a proactive unit within the organisation as illustrated by the schedule of QA briefings that take place each year in the organisation (Appendix 4). The briefings serve to impart key information to practitioners and managers alike in the quality assurance procedures contributing to a standardised approach to key elements of provision across the sector. The SER (p. 41) states this is borne out by the response from FET Managers/Coordinators of whom 96% responded when surveyed said that ‘WWETB’s QA procedures are known at programme level, and they are effective and ‘fit for purpose’.

98% of the same respondents said that 'The QA procedures have a standing in WWETB FET provision and there is a conscious effort to adhere to them by staff'. 98% of these FET Managers know where to find all key Quality Assurance documentation. When asked if these policies and procedures contributed to a 'culture of quality' 91% (average) of FET staff responded that they do. During the review team meetings with practitioners there was further confirmation that practitioners viewed the QA support, particularly the digital support during the remote learning period, the standardisations of revised policies and procedures as essential to protect WWETB's educational reputation and to enhance their own professional practices.

The review team is pleased to see these responses; however, they were also conscious that WWETB had undertaken an internal review of its documentation of quality assurance policy and procedures and there was no reference to internal or external benchmarking. The review team acknowledge the QA work completed to-date and the QA team's confidence that QA is understood and functioning in a cohesive and standardised manner across the organisation. However, they also share their concerns in relation to the number of identified actions in the SER (p.42), these include, the lack of public display/dissemination of these policies via the WWETB website, the lack of learner representation on the QA Steering group and by their own admission on (p.41), that WWETB has no systematic process for the review of policies and procedures.

During review team meetings the review team endeavoured to explore with the QA steering group members their progress on these actions to include current work, future plans and timeframe, given that the ETB are now seen as a well-established organisation. The discussion focused on how WWETB's plans to monitor and evaluate their stated six measures of quantitative quality to include access/enrolment numbers, retention, completion rates, certification, transfer and progression. The review team is keen to emphasise the value and importance of setting benchmarks which would serve as performance indicators. In response to the lack of performance indicators, the QA team members were also keen to have acknowledged the "qualitative elements such as soft skills, and life skills provided to many learners" that address active inclusion, local area needs and lifelong learning that cannot and should not be captured in a quantitative manner.

### **Commendations**

- The review team commends WWETB's QA Team who are delivering a very valuable internal service to the organisation that is effective and supports the learners, practitioners, FET Centre Managers/Coordinators and 2<sup>nd</sup> Providers on the ground.
- The review team commends that WWETB's QA Team on the development of the digital and online resources that now form part of the QA Framework to include the digital library of resources, CPD programmes for staff and the SharePoint site.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB use a broader database, for example, sector comparisons with other ETB and/or their European VET counterparts to inform the setting of benchmarks. This would offer an external element to the evaluation of the Quality Assurance Framework to include the effectiveness of policies and procedures.

## Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

The Human Resources (HR) Department is responsible for staff recruitment, management and development. The HR Department reports to the Director of Organisation Support and Development, this directorship position subsequently reports to the Chief Executive. The SER (p. 52) states the recruitment and selection policies, and procedures comply with Irish public sector recruitment and appointment procedures and apply to all instances of recruitment. WWETB fulfils its statutory obligation to advertise all positions and opportunities appropriately. All HR recruitment and staff development procedures ensure the FET learning practitioners are suitably qualified and experienced for their roles with either Teaching Council registration or academic/professional qualifications as appropriate. In Contracted Training provision or with Second providers e.g. Specialist Training Programmes (STPs), or Community Training Centre (CTCs) staff are recruited directly by these external bodies, having first met with the minimum staffing requirements as set out by the WWETB. Applicant called to interview are required to submit referee details prior to interview and subsequent offers of employment are subject to receipt of satisfactory references. Prior to taking up an offered position, the successful candidate must submit evidence (original copies) of professional or technical qualifications.

The SER also states (p. 51) WWETB is “committed to fairness, equality and transparency in respect of all recruitment processes. The process is aligned to best practice and meets all legislation requirements (Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and Disability Act 2005), including Garda vetting. WWETB have developed an Equality policy and adheres to this in all recruitment activity”. At the hiring stage WWETB relies on an interview process backed up with formal references and copies of original qualification parchments. In terms of Contracted Training Providers, the competency of their staff must be in line with the ETB guidelines with specific reference to the requirements in terms of the Validation of Teacher Qualifications.

The SER states (p. 52) “recruited staff are made aware of their line-manager and reporting structures as appropriate to the position”. The SER also states (p. 57) “there is an induction process and new staff are introduced to the values, systems and supports that WWETB implements”. It would seem to the review team that there is a well-developed system for professional learning and development in operation and there is a healthy uptake on upskilling opportunities by WWETB FET staff ensuring a constantly evolving practitioner workforce and a growing culture of excellence and innovation. During a review team meeting, the review team was informed about an Employee Assistance programme, this is viewed as progressive in terms of the management of staff and their general welfare. However, as indicated in the Self Evaluation Report (P. 52) WWETB does not currently have a formal performance management and development system (PMDS) in place.

In terms of monitoring these standards and enhancing them over time the SER states (p. 54) “the organisation prides itself on being learner focussed and this can only happen through regular



consultation with the learner cohort. One method of this is by way of end of course evaluations. Currently learners provide feedback on their experiences of courses via course evaluation forms which are completed at or near the end of courses. These evaluations are locally devised, and while they are largely similar, there are variations. This flexibility allows Course Managers to garner the information they need to improve and refine courses. In most instances, learners are invited to give their feedback on their experience of the teaching and learning in terms of variance and effectiveness of methodologies used, how organised they felt the practitioners was, how approachable/supportive they were etc. This information allows the addressing of obvious issues that might be evident with regard to a practitioner's performance".

Furthermore, from the review meetings, it was evident that the use of a class representative system is ad-hoc across the service provision but clearly beneficial when in place. Therefore, a more formal class representative structure may help both the learner cohorts and enhance effective feedback responses. It was also clear from review discussions that there is no centralised generation of metrics and associated analysis of learner feedback data within the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).

There is significant evidence that staff development is strongly supported by the QA team through the production of a variety of resource materials which are mainly to be found on the SharePoint site. The SER states (p. 53) "WWETB is hugely dedicated to the development of all staff in line with the strategic commitment to quality provision in across all services". However, during the review meetings it was pointed out that for IT security reasons SharePoint access is not universal across all of the WWETB's provision. This situation may be worth reviewing, as such a development could greatly help with general staff communications and facilitate specific communications on current staff development initiatives such as 'good news' stories which in turn may contribute to the enhancement of employee engagement.

The review team is pleased to see the recent appointment, similar to other ETBs, of a dedicated Professional Learning Development (PLD) coordinator and consider this to be an essential role with over 440 members of staff involved in further education, training and development. They are also pleased to see that a professional learning policy was approved in April 2021.

Whilst covered in other areas of this report in more detail, the review team note that the forward-thinking nature of some of the programmes on offer, such as the Near Zero Emission Building (NZEB) Programme, the Industry 4.0 facility and course modules on biodiversity, which all indicate a level of development and growth within the staff population consistent with being able to provide such programmes. However, the review team also note that WWETB engage the use of contracted training in some of the more contemporary programmes which are in high demand e.g., Clean Room Operations. There is no doubt that keeping staff current with industry trends and the needs of the sector is a significant challenge and will continue to be a challenge over time for staff development.

However, this challenge if not addressed will result in a significant increase in outsourced provision of services with all the potential cost and risk of an outsourced service provision whilst also maintaining an in-house staff cohort.

The review team note the self-directed initiative taken by WWETB in appointing a consultancy firm to conduct a HR review. The finding and recommendations will provide key input to the preparation of WWETB's Strategic Statement 2023-2027.

In summary, whilst there are possible improvements in terms of staff recruitment, development, and management, as it stands the overwhelming impression portrayed during the review team meetings with the learners was of an impression of 'excellent staff'. This is true at all levels in terms of service provision. Many staff appear to be willing and capable of providing ex-curricular support for learners including pastoral, general guidance and job placement support particularly in centres where these services are not provided by WWETB dedicated staff.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends WWETB initiation of self-directed actions in term of its HR Policy development to include the appointment of a Professional Learning Development (PLD) coordinator and the engagement of a consultancy firm to carry out a generalised HR review. These actions demonstrate that Staff Recruitment, Development and Management are important to the WWETB and are considered necessary to achieve identified targets and priorities.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB, in the absence of a national framework for PMDS in the sector, consider developing a formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system to support staff and to enhance their skills and qualifications as they progress through their careers.

## **Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation**

The review team finds that WWETB's programme approval process is systematically robust with a transparent and effective oversight process. The process enables FET Management to plan provision efficiently (and in accordance with WWETB's strategy) so that localised needs are catered for and the potential of competition between FET programmes is greatly reduced. The various stages of the programme approval process provide structure and clarity around course and programme options and enables a complimentary regional provision. They are also fortunate to have an Innovation and Development Manager as a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

Figure 5.1 taken from the SER (p. 62) below illustrates the process.

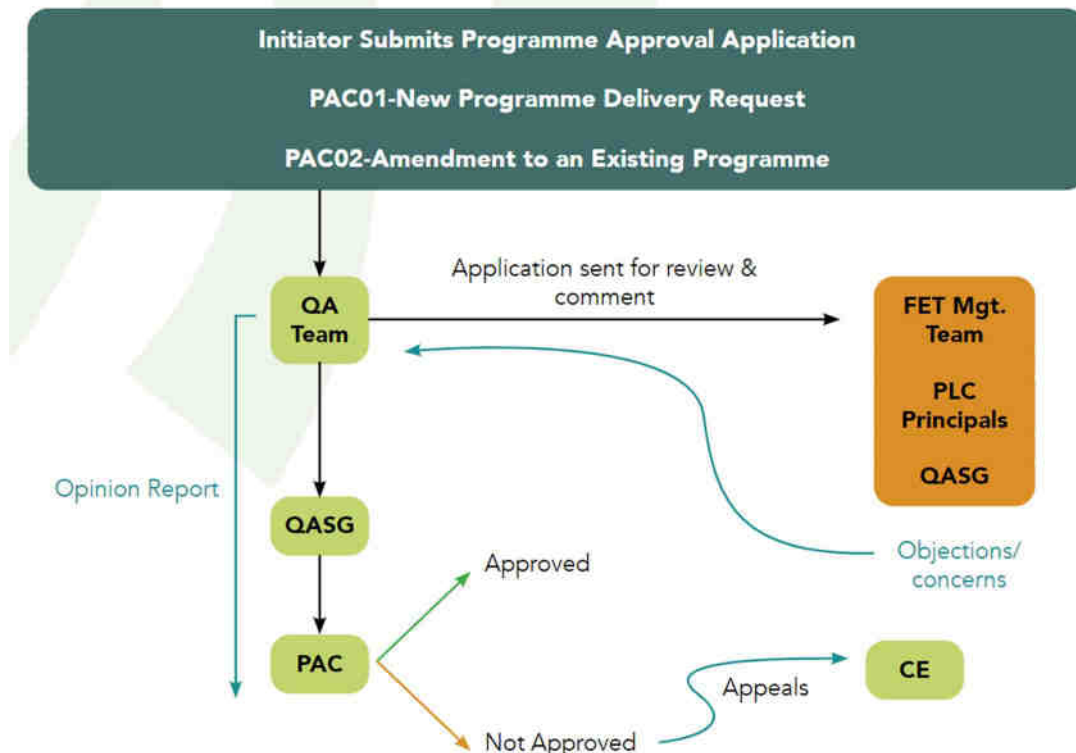


Figure 5.1: Programme Approval Workflow

The SER states (p.46) “WWETB’s stated vision is to be a provider of high-quality, inclusive, responsive, and innovative programmes”. The review team note that this vision is commendable and sets WWETB on the path to meet their own stated FET Priorities outlined in their Strategic Performance Agreement with SOLAS 2018-2020<sup>6</sup> which are “to meet the evolving needs of the labour market, active inclusion, progression to other learning opportunities, lifelong learning and workforce upskilling, and evolving the delivery of learning and developing new programmes”.

It was evident during the review meetings that WWETB are committed to the achievement of the agreed targets as set out in the Strategic Performance Agreement (2018-2020), and many of their recent innovative projects are testimony to their ability to innovate and collaborate. For example, as outlined in the SER on (p.46), in 2019 WWETB applied for and received funding under the SOLAS programme ‘Innovation Through Collaboration Fund’. The selected innovation projects are cultivating strategic alliances across the ETB’s industry partners and enterprise stakeholders, covering innovative, design and delivery and enterprise engagement. This funding is also facilitating WWETB’s Training Services to invest in technology within apprenticeship and adult training courses to ensure learners are exposed to the most modern equipment including, cleanroom and packaging and pharmaceutical manufacturing (automated smart factory) and virtual reality training packages for weld training, classic car restoration and spray painting.

The review team is really impressed with the high-quality, responsive, and innovative programmes, such as the NZEB project, the Digital Assisted Eco Driving course, the new Early Learning and Childcare Level 5 and 6 awards, the Polyethylene Electro Fusion Welding and the development of a Local Education and Training Planning (LETP) for the Bunclody Region and the Dungarvan Northwest Region.

The review meeting discussions supported the finding in the SER that WWETB is innovative and committed to programme development. However, the discussions also revealed and confirmed that the risks and challenges identified in WWETB Strategic Performance agreement (2018-2022) (p. 20) such as, a falling pool of available learners from the unemployed group, especially aged under 25, growth in demand for part-time provision relative to full-time provision and resourcing the new national policy framework for skills development of people in employment, are very real concerns on the ground and need to be addressed. The review team agree that some are within the control of WWETB, and others are outside their control.

During the review meetings other areas of concern were identified. These include learners noting that some of their programme modules were outdated, for example, outdated QQI IT modules or modules not available at all levels such as ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) modules at QQI Level 1 to 3. The practitioners explaining if modules are outdated or not available, they just have to find workarounds. Other practitioners expressed their concerns that the programme development process can take a significant amount of time and the QA team cited the lack of curriculum development resources as a contributing factor. This is also an identified action in the SER (p. 65) to explore the possibility of creating a specific programme development unit as part of the QA Team. The review team affirms the need for WWETB to expand the QA team to include capacity for curriculum development.

It also became clear to the review team while there are very good examples of programme development there is also a sizeable proportion of programme development that is centre driven and conducted in a reactive mode. This operational and reactive approach is outlined in the SER on (p. 65) "the QA team regularly updates and recirculated QQI module descriptors where there have been errors identified or elements have become out-dated or irrelevant. Finally, there was evidence of some collaborative programme development, for example, the QQI agriculture award and the early learning and care award and these are welcomed initiatives.

### ***Commendations***

- The review team commends WWETB on their innovative programme developments such as the NZEB project and the Digital Assisted Eco Driving course that are addressing the National FET strategic priorities to include the evolving needs of the economy and upskilling employees.
- The review team commends WWETB's use of data and labour market information for the Bunclody Regional Plan and Dungarvan Northwest Regional Plan. They are good examples of using a structured and evidence-based approach to course and programme development.

### ***Recommendations***

- The review team recommends that WWETB develop systematic processes to share good practice developed in parts of the organisation to support the quality and enhancement of all provision, for example, the innovative programme developments and the structured learner support services on apprenticeships programmes could better inform WWETB's approach to programme development and enhancement in other sections of their FET provision.
- The review team recommends that WWETB develop as part of their QA framework a structured approach, with an appropriate infrastructure, that is fully resourced, to support curriculum/programme development across their FET provision.
- The review team recommend that WWETB build QA capacity in order to seek devolved responsibility, from QQI, for programme development and approval.
- The review team recommends that WWETB review of their current FET provision to enhance the development of their next Strategic Plan 2023-2027. WWETB's FET amalgamated services are now embedded in the organisation and it would be timely to review the provision to ensure WWETB continues and grows in their ability to actions strategic priorities identified in their Self Evaluation Report (SER).

## Access, Transfer and Progression

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p.67) “WWETB is committed to a transparent and fair approach to the enrolment of learners onto their FET programmes”. Accessing WWETB run programmes begins with programme/course promotion and awareness and (p. 68) the SER continues to explain that the management of a prospective learner application is a centre-managed process. Entry requirements are in-line with the national criteria as set down for each provision type and in line with the entry criteria as proposed by the certifying body.

The review team is satisfied, having read Chapter 6 of the SER, reviewed WWETB website, centres' websites, spoken with the SMT, the FET Management Team, the QA Steering Group, the QA Team Centre Managers/Principals/Coordinators/Guidance Counsellors and external stakeholders (employers and higher education institute representatives) that there is significant ongoing work being done at ETB and Centre level, to offer and promote a good range of courses, screen applicants, put additional learning supports in place where necessary and where funding allows to ensure learners have good educational experiences and achieve qualifications commensurate with their ability and potential.

Discussions at the review meetings confirmed that formalised progression pathways are viewed as important promotional opportunities and that the progression experience for their FET learners to HEIs, in general, although evidence is anecdotal, is very successful. The review team is also pleased to hear that the introduction of standardised testing and a revised induction and learner support programme in conjunction with the adult education provision has greatly benefited the apprenticeship programmes and their learners. WWETB intend by 2024, and in-line with national policy, that all FET learners prior to course commencement will be formally assessed to enhance learners' ability to choose the right course and to allow the FET centre to identify additional and/or learning support requirements.

The review team are impressed with a range of good practices identified to support access, transfer and progression to include:

- the programme approval process required specific information on the progression options for learners.
- revised Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) are between HEIs, and the WWETB giving greater access to the broader WWETB learner cohorts.
- Appointment of an Access and Disability Officer.
- Initiatives such as: progression pathways with Sunderland University, sharing of innovative programme development with other EU, American and Canadian Universities and participation in Erasmus programmes.

- Initiatives to support and upskill people in employment, collaborative approaches to programme development. WWETB's flexibility and responsiveness to industry needs and regular monitoring and review of programmes to include responding to learner feedback.

During the review discussion meetings, some of the practitioners and external stakeholders' representatives were keen to indicate areas that need to be addressed at local or national level such as:

- Regularise the two Level 6 Awards on the NQF, to allow seamless progression for FET learners.
- Recommend making the MOUs between FET and HEIs more about strategic partnerships and collaborations rather than just course progression. For example, explore the sharing of programme development, resources/facilities, and staff CPD programmes. WWETB have some limited experience with Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) where resources have been shared in the past. Another example would allow for WWETB and the local HE Institutes to continue, in partnership, to invest in developing Human Capital to meet the economic and skills needs of the Southeast region and contribute to meeting the needs of the National Economy.

The review team acknowledges that WWETB have shown examples of good practice and have a clear understanding that access, transfer and progression is fundamental to course development, meeting the needs of learners and employers, and contributing to the achievement of National FET priorities. However, due to the lack of concrete data, it is difficult to fully ascertain if all learners in each of WWETB's provision are being afforded access, transfer and progression opportunities commensurate with their ability and achievements. This concern is also acknowledged in the SER on page 70 which states "*an overarching policy on access, transfer and progression is a key document that needs to be developed so that standardised procedures can be quality assured*". The review meeting with the Guidance Counsellors also confirmed that some learners are formally supported but many are informally supported on their learning journey by their teachers/tutors/coordinator. The team also deduces that while there is evidence of specific learning supports, advice and guidance, the consistency and documentation of internal and external transfer and progression pathways is sporadic and based on available resources.

### **Commendations**

- The review team commends WWETB's access, transfer and progression examples evidenced in the SER and their commitment to ensuring that access, transfer and progression is an integral element to course development and to the achievement of Local and National FET priorities.



- The review team commends WWETB for appointing an Access and Disability Officer, and their commitment to formally assessing all FET learners prior to course commencement by 2024.
- The review team commends WWETB's revised Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with HEIs that gives greater access to the broader WWETB learner cohorts.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB's develop formal systems to promote and track internal and external access, transfer and progression opportunities between and from each of their FET provisions.

## **Integrity and Approval of Learner Results**

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p. 75) integrity in assessment has been a keen focus of the QA Team and the development of assessment policies and procedures coupled with the effort that has gone into standardising approaches across provision has paid dividends in this regard. Feedback from the survey groups indicates that integrity, consistency, and security in assessment procedures is an area of strength. 98% of practitioners surveyed indicated that 'there are standard procedures and documentation in place relating to assessment'. In addition to this the briefings have engendered an understanding across provision of the role of QA and familiarity with the personnel on the QA team. The QA team is seen as a support unit within FET and the survey of practitioners indicated that they know where they can seek clarification for any queries pertaining to assessment. The SER reports details (p. 73 and 74) many other good practices such as briefing sessions each year for new practitioners, a QA SharePoint site with extensive assessment resources, assessment policies and procedures i.e., Examinations and Assessment Malpractice policy and procedures, a common Appeals Policy for the FET provision. The integrity of the assessment process is monitored by way of a results approval process incorporating internal verification (IV) external authentication (EA) and a results approval panel. Finally, as stated in the SER (p. 76) the QA team produces an internal report annually based on the review of all EA reports for that year. This report enables the QA Team to assess areas of systematic good practice or any recurring issues or patterns of systematic under-performance.

The review team meetings confirmed and welcomed the good oversight of setting, marking and securing assessments including reviews of the exam processes and peer review. The review team heard good consistent feedback from all FET provision, while, acknowledging, certain differences based on the needs of the different provisions. A number of practitioners specifically expressed, that

they feel well supported by their Programme Managers and the QA staff. They explained that they have embraced the new QA policies and procedures and WWETB's SharePoint resources, to include, the CPD (Continuous Professional Development) programmes, recognising that QA changes and supports are important in order to keep up the organisation's QA standards and to support them as professionals. Practitioners including new members of staff who joined just before the COVID-19 pandemic, or recently, also, clearly felt they were directed and supported to ensure they were able to teach and assess in a face-to-face or online environment. The data on the 'Three Year Completion Rates per FET division sheets', confirm, while there were some percentage decreases in certification attainment in 2020, it was confined to FET provisions where teaching and learning for particular cohorts of learners was extremely challenging in an online environment or due to other COVID-19 related factors that impinged on learners' ability to continue with their education.

It is evident from the SER that the QA team are very pleased with their overall governance and oversight in this area and confident that WWETB take a robust approach to integrity and approval of results. The ETB acknowledged that there are still areas that need further attention, such as, the Reasonable Accommodation Policy, better use of completion and certification data collected to review and monitor the outcomes of each of their FET provision against the objectives and priorities of each of their FET provisions. The review team affirmed the integrity and approval of the results process and acknowledge WWETB commitment to making ongoing enhancements to the process and supporting policies as needed. As part of the ongoing enhancement process the review team encourage WWETB to ensure the QA monitoring and review process informs WWETB's evaluation of contemporary teaching and learning methods. This should include identification and sharing of good practice e.g. the success of blended learning initiatives and/or formative instructional practices.

During the Levels 1 to 4 Practitioners review meeting the practitioners were keen to stress the importance and value of providing unaccredited course provision, and hobby courses. They conveyed how often it is an initial way to encourage a prospective learner to come into the adult learning environment and while the outcomes are often not quantifiable, they are the steppingstones to many prospective learners' return to education and thus feeling confident at a later stage to take an accredited course.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends WWETB's ongoing work to create policies, procedures, and systems to support the integrity of assessment and approval of learner results. The review team noted that this work is valued by all practitioners interviewed and demonstrates a commitment to an organisation wide QA culture.

***Recommendation***

- The Review Team recommends that WWETB consider additional processes that could further enhance the overall QA monitoring and review process.

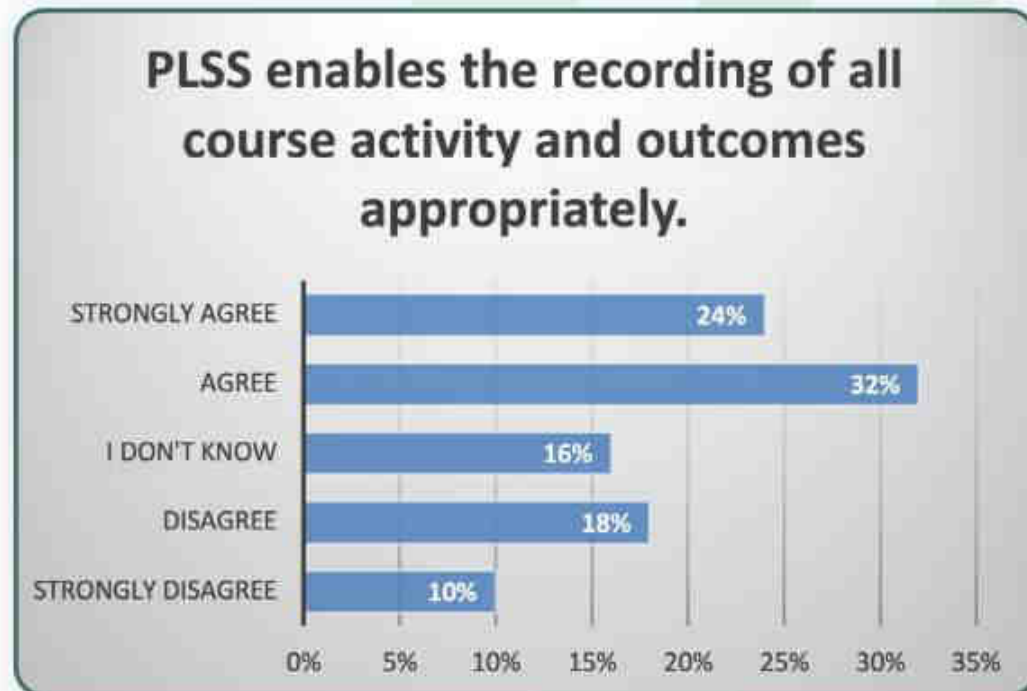
## Information and Data Management

The review team examined Chapter 8 (Information and Data Management) of the SER, the additional documentation and the data indicators provided by WWETB. Information and data management was then explored during the review meetings with WWETB representatives, in particular with the SER steering group, the QA steering group, the quality team and in the meeting dedicated to Data Analytics and the Program Learner Support System (PLSS). Finally, to support the exploration, an extra session specifically dedicated to a demonstration of WWETB's QA SharePoint was organised.

The Self-Evaluation Report states (p.81) “WWETB has in place a Data Protection Policy which asserts the types of information that WWETB collects and the way this information is used. The policy also outlines the rights and responsibilities of the individual and WWETB as the Data Controller. There is a Data Protection Officer in place and a Governance and Compliance team. The IT department ensure that all IT platforms in use across WWETB educational provisions are adequately robust in terms of security. Data breaches are managed in line with the Data Protection Act 2018”.

The review team understands that WWETB uses the PLSS as a management information system. The ETB uses this system to manage course information, learner records and reporting, and providing the key data on FET course outputs and outcomes. However, following review meeting discussions and based on information outlined in the SER (p. 82) there are some concerns about the reliability of data collected through the PLSS. This is further supported by survey results confirming 44% of FET Managers lack support for the PLSS to record all course activity and outcomes appropriately.

See the table below taken from the SER (p. 83).



*Figure 8.2: GMQ-H4(b)*

WWETB's Strategic Performance Agreement (2018-2020) with SOLAS agreed target contributions as per the six national FET core targets. However, WWETB's Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-2020 – Monitoring/Review states (p.1) that it is not possible for WWETB to accurately monitor targets 1 and 2:

1. Securing learners employment from provision which primarily serves the labour market. This data is not always known, recorded accurately or satisfies the definition of employment in the context of the target.
  
2. Learners' progression to other further or higher education courses from provision which is primarily focussed on this purpose. This data is not always known, recorded accurately or satisfies the definition of progression in the context of the target.

In relation to Targets 3–6, the progression toward them has been calculated, although consistency problems between the various databases have been reported.

The review team notes that WWETB's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) contains minimum information or data in relation to learner performance, progression and certification, with few indicators and benchmarks used to measure the organisation's performance.

The evidence of the statements reported in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is largely based on the analysis of the responses received to a survey covering all aspects connected to the management and development of the Quality Assurance system. The survey was conducted with internal and external stakeholders listed below:

- Learners, Practitioners
- FET Centre Coordinators
- FET Principals and Managers
- Community Training Managers
- Local Employers

The response of the last category was quite low (20% response). WWETB did not breakdown the learners' responses per centre as this is deemed a sensitive issue. It is the view of the review team that this choice makes it difficult to ascertain the representativeness of the survey between local centres.

The WWETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER) expresses concerns about the use of quantitative data i.e. “An aspect of this policy development which is cause for much consideration is the possible implementation of benchmarks which would serve as performance indicators. There are varying possible benefits and detriments to sharing quantitative information at each level in the organisation, especially in a comparative fashion” (SER p.84).

During the review there were extensive discussions between the QA and review teams about the limited use of data and indicators and conclusions were:

1. There was a lack of confidence in the reliability of the PLSS data to make decisions and draw conclusions. This includes different deadlines set for data collection by SOLAS (e.g. calendar - academic year and calendar year) and the consistency of the data collected by the PLSS with the data collected internally by WWETB.
2. The breadth and diversity of WWETB's educational programme provision makes it difficult to construct indicators that can be used to evaluate these different educational programmes.
3. There were concerns about the limits and dangers associated with a quantitative approach that risks focusing practitioners' attention on the most quantifiable aspects of the education and training process, overshadowing soft skills, or increasing success rates.

Also, in other WWETB strategic documents, such as *the “WWETB Annual Report 2020”*, the evidence of the achievement of strategic objectives is based only on qualitative indicators, while quantitative targets are lacking. Some quantitative data is collected (e.g., those regarding SOLAS targets 3-6) but there is no evidence of decision-making based on these performance indicators.

From the documentation presented by WWETB, the indicators do not appear to be used to analyse and compare the performances of local centres. It was stated that centres do use their own local data and make suitable interventions to programmes as necessary.

The WWETB Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the period January 2021-December 2021, under section 5 Improve Data & Information Systems and Analysis, includes subsection 5.3 Research meaningful ways of using data indicators for continuous improvement.

It is clear to the review team that WWETB commits to accuracy and validity in terms of the data and information it creates, uses and provides to other bodies. In order to identify risks to the accuracy of data and address them where possible, WWETB has created a “Data caveat and limitations index” which lists any apparent or potential limitations or deficiencies in any of the data used.

The review team are of the opinion that WWETB is fully aware of and are meeting the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (2014). There is a policy and procedures in place for the processing of freedom of information (FOI) requests. There are designated personnel in place to manage FOI requests. Records are kept of all FOI requests and the data forms part of the CE’s report to the WWETB Board. Data Protection and Freedom of Information requests are handled by Corporate Services personnel to ensure compliance with the relevant acts.

### **Commendations**

- The review team commends WWETB's commitment to the use of data to inform strategic decision making. This is exemplified through their approaches to developing Local Education and Training Development Plans (e.g. Bunclody Regional Plan and Dungarvan Northwest Regional Plan).
- The review team commends the commitment by WWETB to ensure compliance with data legislation and the integrity of learner records.
- The review team commends the development of the WWETB QA SharePoint to store and channel necessary information facilitating timely analysis of data and subsequent decision making.



## **Recommendations**

- The review team recommends that WWETB develop a data strategy policy, to include clear organisational performance indicators, and that the ETB further develop their use of performance data in support of strategic decision-making.
- The review team recommends WWETB continued investment in the data team and ongoing training to improve data literacy and interpretation across the organisation.

## **Public Information and Communication**

The review team completed a review of WWETB's adherence to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016<sup>7</sup> regarding Public Information and Communications.

WWETB has in place a Communications Steering Group supported by a Communications Officer. The review team finds that this dedicated role ensures there is adequate resource to focus on communications and to ensure their plans can be implemented effectively.

Based on an overall review of the SER and review team meeting discussions, in particular, with the CE and the Senior Management Team (SMT) members it was evident that leadership, governance and communications is prioritised as one of the five main goals of the WWETB's Statement of Strategy (2018-2022). To support the achievement of their communications goal, eighteen specific actions have been identified in their most recently published Annual Report (2020). These include the standardisation of the WWETB website and college/centre websites, to develop mechanisms to capture feedback from learners, staff and external stakeholders, to organise information events for key external stakeholders, including the media and employers, to attend public exhibitions in the region with good quality displays and promotional material and to deliver a strong brand identity for the organisation, backed up by a set of brand guidelines.

In summary, some progress on these actions was evident to the review team throughout the WWETB review process. Furthermore, the team found these actions to be consistent with QQI's Core QA Statutory Guidelines.

The review team notes its positive feedback on WWETB's website such as, the website has clear and concise information relating to its services, policies, published reports, job vacancies, and includes good links to related websites and a news feed. The team welcomes WWETB commitment to further enhance their website and related sites.

Other social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were also found to be active, with near daily posts and information updates. It is the opinion of the review team that these social media platforms are definitely more engaging than the website in terms of a user experience.

In relation to internal communications, the impression the review team gained is that WWETB is an organisation with strongly established communication channels. The review team notes a number of factors that are contributing to this outcome.

1. The organisational intranet portal, whilst the content was not reviewed in detail the development of such a portal is yet another demonstration of WWETB's commitment to appropriate resourcing of the communications function.
2. The QA Team appear central to effective internal communications, they are understood to be responsive and knowledgeable by the staff. The QA Team's SharePoint Portal is also a significant resource and a useful aid to good internal communications.
3. A strong sense of community amongst the staff and service users was really evident during the review process. In effect WWETB has an effective and appropriate culture to support strong communications given its role in education and the community.

The SER provided a comprehensive list of FET representation on outside boards (SER Appendix 5). WWETB also maintain strong relationships with national and international bodies (SER. P. 133). Furthermore, there is evidence of strong links with industry although this varies in intensity dependent upon FET service provision. The review team believe that the application of additional resources in the Service to Business Unit has benefited from deepening industry links which may prove beneficial in terms of developing additional industry partners and providing additional progression opportunities for learners.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends WWETB's provision of appropriate resources to support the communications processes. The communications structures in terms of policy, resources and technology are well thought through and implemented effectively.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB continue to develop and enhance their communications strategies to support the effective promotion of educational services at organisation and centre level, for example, improve the consistency of industry links across the FET provision, increase student voice participation at Centre and ETB level, develop systematic learner, staff and external stakeholders feedback structures and organise information events for key external stakeholders.

## Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

### The Learning Environment

It was evident to the team that WWETB is committed to providing appropriate learning environments and supports to their diverse range learners. The Self Evaluation Report (SER) (p. 93) states “central to WWETB’s FET provision is the establishment of high-quality and fit-for-purpose facilities for learners and staff. In addition to this, the furnishing of these facilities with the highest quality ICT infrastructure, including high-speed broadband, wireless networks, cloud-based storage, internet usage protocols and policies, are expressed commitments of the organisation in the Strategy Statement 2018-2022”.

Buildings and refurbishments are managed by the WWETB Buildings and Services Team. The organisation invests substantially in the building infrastructure to ensure fit-for purpose facilities across both county’s provision. Details of expenditure on building and infrastructure is reported to the WWETB Board and formally to SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) as appropriate and these expenditures are audited by the Central Auditor to ensure compliance with procurement legislation.

WWETB has a designated Health and Safety Advisor and there are procedures in place across the organisation to ensure that working and learning environment are safe and comfortable for the users.

The review team is satisfied, having read Chapter 10 of the SER that there is ongoing work being carried out at organisational and centre level to ensure appropriated premises, facilities, specialist equipment to include IT equipment and accessible access where possible is provided for staff and learners. It was noted in the SER that there are variances in premises, facilities and IT supports from excellent facilities (p. 99-101) to ‘not so good’ survey feedback in relation to the learning environments (p. 95-96). The review team also heard from practitioners of the lack of dedicated communal study spaces within some centres, the feasibility of providing more study spaces for learners is something for the ETB to consider further to enhance the learning environments. *Page Break*

Finally, it was stated in the SER (p. 96) and acknowledged during review meetings that practitioners and learners appreciated how WWETB addressed the COVID-19 challenges by procuring emergency funding for the purchase of new laptops for learners and then enhancing this with additional financial support from internal resources.

The review team is pleased to note that WWETB have a designated Work Experience Policy in place for learners who are required to enter the premises of other companies and associated procedures in

place so that all parties are suitably aware of their responsibilities and are protected appropriately by way of insurance.

Identifiable actions by the QA Team include the need to support the Access and Disability Officer in the development of a new inclusion policy and the need to review the practices around work experience placements, including further consultation with providers with a view to providing more supports to Work Experience providers to enhance assessment for learning.

The review team is also impressed with the range of good practices identified by learners and practitioners during the review meetings that happen formally and informally to support learners, including:

- Formal and informal approaches to learner support at centre level including career guidance, wellbeing initiatives, literacy and numeracy assistance, progress feedback, and digital literacy support especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The class representative protocol, where active, has ensured that the learner's voice is heard.
- Collaboration with local libraries has proved a beneficial learner resource and support.
- Moodle was identified as an excellent resource repository for the learners, updating of this resource rested with the teachers/tutors and this model worked.
- Youthreach was identified as an excellent referral service for struggling families and learners. The programme caters for 16–21-year-olds that have left school with little or no qualifications.

Learners consulted during the review meetings described Teachers/Tutors' enthusiasm across all programmes as an 'above and beyond' attitude which included directing learners towards employment and progression opportunities and continually assisting learners in their own 'learning to learn' and 'lifelong learning journey'.

Based on the SER and oral feedback, it would appear to the review team that learners enjoy their programmes of study and feel safe and secure within their learning environments.

### **Commendations**

- The review team commends WWETB's ongoing commitment to resourcing high-quality and fit-for-purpose facilities for learners and staff, including the addition of an Access and Disability officer to the QA Team and plans for the development of a "FET College of the Future" in Wexford.

- The review team commends WWETB's support structures, both formal and informal, that were evidenced to support staff and learners and their commitment to providing working and learning environments that are safe and comfortable for staff and learners.

### **Recommendations**

- The review team recommends that WWETB increase 'learner voice participation' in the QA governance and oversight processes and develop a system that is suitable and consistently implemented to capture and act on learner feedback, to include the learner experience, capturing and acting on learners' feedback during the programme and not only at the end of the programme.
- The review team recommends that WWETB provide a more cohesive approach to the provision of learner supports, to ensure all learners have appropriate access to learning support services, to include counselling and psychotherapy services if deemed necessary.

### **Assessment of Learners**

The SER states (p. 103) WWETB stand over the fairness and transparency of their assessment activity and the veracity and accuracy with which assessment material is set, processed, and graded. WWETB predominantly uses the two legacy systems for assessment of learners, the Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) and Locally Devised Assessment (LDA). Both systems are based on and follow the requirements of QQI's CAS Awards standards and include external authentication in association with assessment and grading to ensure they are in line with the respective award standards. Assessments leading to non-QQI awards are generally developed by the awarding body.

The review team is pleased to see that WWETB's QA Team have commenced an initiative that entails the process of supporting Community Training programmes to transition from the use of AISs to the use of LDAs. As stated in the SER (p. 107) this action is a collaborative one involving the training programmes Management and Practitioners teams, members of the QA Team and appropriate FET Managers. The review team believes that moving to one system will avoid duplication and overlap and it will support a consistent approach to the integration of QA within the ETB.

The SER states (p. 104) that Teaching, and Learning portfolios contain the module information including the learning outcomes, indicative content, an overview of the assessment, marking schemes and total marks achievable for each assessment piece. All assessment activity is linked to the intended learning outcomes for the respective award and FET practitioner staff engaged with locally devised assessment processes are made aware of the Grid of Level indicators by way of QA

assessment briefings and the QA SharePoint site. Exams which are prescribed within certain modules are run with reference to the WWETB Examination Handbook which establishes exam conditions.

During the review team meetings, learners expressed how their tutors/teachers were very supportive and that they were well informed about their assessment, “the assessment briefs always provide detail of what has to be done, how it has to be done and the submission deadlines and other related matters’. It was evident that at the core of the teaching and learning is the relationship between the teachers/tutors and their learners. The learners also indicated during the review meetings that they receive written and aural feedback on their assignments. The SER noted (p. 107) that end of course evaluations are used by WWETB FET centres to gain the benefits of the learner voice. However, the review team’s understanding is that the review of learner feedback is at centre level and the type and timing of the feedback is centre driven, with the exception of the recent SER learners’ survey and focus groups which was organisation- wide.

The review team also gleaned from the review meetings that WWETB successfully modified arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic and completion rate reports showed that a high percentage of learners achieved their intended awards during the assessment periods in 2020 and 2021.

The SER states (p. 106) learners have the right to appeal their grades and there is a robust procedure in place for this. The review team did not investigate how this procedure is working from a learner’s perspective as learners attending review meetings had not appealed their grades.

The review team got a sense from the practitioners they talked to that they really valued the PLD programmes that they had attended and found the most recent online PLD resources very beneficial, not only to help them through the pandemic but as a more user-friendly way to upskill, as they didn’t have to travel long distances and could access material on a need’s basis from the comfort of their centre or home. What needs to be borne in mind is that practitioner participation on the PLD programmes is voluntary so apart from the practitioners the review team met, it is hard to quantify how widespread the up take is among all staff.

Areas identified for improvement in the SER (p. 107) include the reasonable accommodation policy to ensure equity and fairness for all learners in terms of their learning and assessment, including the provision of support options for learners who may be unfairly disadvantaged by the course of assessment formats. During the review team meetings with Guidance Counsellors and FET Coordinators/Managers, it was clear that the level of support was dependant on the funding provided to the different FET provisions. For example, the apprentices have a very structured learner support system, the PLC learners who can prove they had specific learning needs are entitled to apply for additional support by making a special application and resources allocated are based on their needs

identified on their application form. However, it was not clear how well-resourced other provisions are to cater for the additional needs of their learners such as community and adult education provisions.

The SER (p. 170) also identified the review and monitoring of work experience placements as needing attention. It is clear that there are good relationships between centres and their local employers. However, the formality around linking the work experience tasks to the intended learning outcomes and how to give constructive feedback are areas that could be improved to enhance the learners' experiences.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends WWETB for the ongoing development of assessment policies and procedures. The outcome of WWETB's SER indicates good performance in the delivery and assessment of learning which was also verified at many of the review meetings.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB include a Teaching, Learning and Assessment group as part of the QA governance structure (see SER (p. 35, figure 2.3) to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB.
- The review team recommends that WWETB make provision to formally facilitate staff to collaborate under the concept of "Communities of Practice" as stated in the SER on (p. 49) and to support a culture where individuals engaged in Professional Learning and Development (PLD) further share their learning with their peers in a more formal way as stated in the SER on (p. 108).

## **Supports for Learners**

The SER states (p. 112) in line with the organisational values, learner supports begins at centre-level. This is something that was mentioned throughout the review meetings, that the staff in the centres are mostly responsible for identifying and implementing solutions to learners' needs. The feedback from all of the learners regarding staff involvement in this section was very positive. It seems within WWETB that the staff at centre-level are doing an exceptional job in regard to assisting learners with a wide variety of needs. The most common learner support identified during the review meetings was around numeracy and literacy. One learner spoke of their struggle in school due to the fact that they have dyslexia but found that the supports in place on their FET course were extremely beneficial to their learning and also their mental health. They said a support tutor would frequently work one to one with them and they immediately noticed their education level improving.



During the review meetings the review team noted that practitioners and learners spoke about mental health supports; however, evidence of mental health supports for learners seems to vary from centre to centre and were mainly provided on an informal basis. Learner supports in general seem to be more programme based rather than organisation-wide, for example, there seemed to be more awareness of the supports available for apprenticeship learners compared to learners attending community and adult based educational programmes. It was also clear that there were mixed experiences among learners in relation to what learner supports were available and their entitlement to access same.

A FET Centre Coordinator mentioned when classes first went online due to COVID-19 tutors quickly realised that many learners found this change very challenging. Therefore, to help some of the learners the tutors stayed online after class in case anyone needed to talk. It was also noted that some programmes had a class representative system in place and this system was very beneficial. The learners could bring any issues and/or concerns to the class representative and they could then pass on any issues and/or concerns to the relevant person (teacher/tutor/coordinator).

With regard to learner supports surrounding COVID-19 the overall feedback from learners was excellent. The review team heard from learners that WWETB had provided them with the necessary supports, including the provision of laptops. In some cases, additional IT training and support was provided, and some tutors and coordinators adjusted how they were delivering their programme to suit their learner cohort.

### ***Commendations***

- The review team commends the ongoing work carried out by coordinators, teachers, tutors, instructors, and specialist support services in supporting their learners.
- The review team commends WWETB COVID-19 emergency contingency plans and responses that ensured that technical and other supports including mental health support were provided to all learners.

### ***Recommendations***

- The review team recommends a review of the various aspects of learner support to ensure that there is a holistic, integrated and consistent offer that can meet the changing demands of their range learners and ensure there is clear referral and reporting mechanisms between services and their courses. This includes ensuring the services are well promoted and can be accessed confidentially and safely.

- The review team recommends that WWETB develop an organisational lead learner support system that integrates with and supports centre/programme-based learner support systems.
- The review team recommends that WWETB develop a system that can monitor, and review, learner supports on a regular basis to ensure they continue to meet evolving learners' needs.

## Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

### Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

As noted in the SER (p. 15), the development of WWETB's QA framework is broadly guided by the EQAVET Quality Cycle and WWETB is now actively investigating data-based quality indicators as a means to further review and inform their practices.

Responsibility for the governance and oversight of FET quality assurance currently resides with the Quality Assurance Steering Group (QASG). This group currently consists of the Quality Assurance Manager, Quality Assurance Officer, two Training Standards Officers, and Management/Coordinator level representation from their various FET provisions. It is chaired by the Quality Manager and reports to the FET Management Team.

The QA Steering Group has responsibility for the approval and oversight of the development of quality assurance policy and processes, program development, delivery, assessment and review, approval of centres to deliver programmes, and results approval (SER p. 33).

The QA Steering Group is supported by the QA team, comprising the QA manager, the QA officer, the Training Standards Officer (TSO) and an Assistant Training Standards Officer (ATSO).

WWETB has drawn up the 2021 Quality Improvement Plan and the 2020 Annual Report, which forms part of the evidence for the Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Section of the SER (WWETB Provider Profile p. 8); furthermore, WWETB monitors the six benchmarks established in the SOLAS Strategic Performance Agreement 2018-2022.

The WWETB Provider Profile states that review happens in a number of ways throughout the organisation. Learners engage in course/programme reviews, and this information is generally used to update/amend courses provision. It is documented in the SER that the QA Team review all Internal Verification and External Authentication reports prior to Results Approval panel meetings (p. 19). As

already noted on page 33 of this report, it would appear to the review team that the ETB monitoring and self-evaluation processes is heavily if not wholly dependent on IV and EA reports.

As already reported at par. 3.1.h, for drafting the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) a survey was organised covering all aspects connected to the management and development of the Quality Assurance system. The results of this survey have been used, together with the internal qualitative analysis, to verify the correctness of the statements contained in the SER and to identify areas of improvement and subsequent actions.

The main documentation of strategic analysis, review, and follow-up of internal quality assurance comes from the WWETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The report contains a description and a strategic analysis of the procedures and processes implemented on the basis of the objectives specified in QQI's Core and Specific Quality Assurance guidelines for providers. The adherence of the activities carried out to the QQI guidelines and to the strategic objectives of the WWETB has been the subject of review by different stakeholder groups through the organisation, by four focus groups and through the SER survey.

Key statements were developed for each section of the guidelines to investigate whether the activities implemented by WWETB met the objectives foreseen; this activity made it possible to verify the consent of the stakeholders with respect to processes and procedures implemented by WWETB, and therefore to verify to what extent they followed QQI requirements. Based on the responses received, a review of the processes and procedures implemented was carried out and areas for improvement and subsequent actions were identified.

These SER actions are described in terms of process (qualitative) and there was no use of quantitative measures to support the proposed SER improvement actions. WWETB's capacity to use quantitative data was also acknowledged in par. 3.1.h, which states that 'it is not possible for WWETB to accurately monitor Targets 1 and 2<sup>s</sup> due to the difficulties of collecting reliable data'. The review team were not made aware of any other documentation or reports that are used to support evidence-based decision making.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) explains that WWETB is developing a FET Programme Data Management Policy, to make this a systematic process for the organisation: in the document FET Programme Data Management Policy (draft 3), WWETB has selected some data sets as 'indicators' for review purposes. It is important to underline that these indicators alone will not be viewed as "performance indicators". WWETB states that programme performance is influenced by many factors and variables, many of which are difficult to capture via data systems in use by WWETB for their FET provision. In addition to this, the concept of 'performance', according to WWETB, is "a contextual concept requiring the consolidation of the experiences and perspectives of all key stakeholders in

order to apply an evaluative measure to a review activity" (FET Programme Data Management Policy p.10).

The datasets, which comprise the incremental indicators, include:

- Certification Data Compliance
- Course Participation Rates (Actuals Vs. Planned)
- Course Completion Rates
- Early-Leavers Reasons
- Certification Rates
- Grade Distribution Analysis

The same document specifies the methodology of data compilation and how this data will be reviewed. There is no mention regarding how to implement the collection of data on learners' employment and progression.

Finally, WWETB commits to aiding centre-level review of provision by providing specific, predefined data sets to Centre-Managers, relevant principals and FET management. This will happen periodically to allow centre-management and FET management to track notable variances and anomalies in data sets.

### ***Commendation***

- The review team commends WWETB's efforts to build up a FET Data Management Policy and to make this a systematic process for the organisation.

### ***Recommendation***

- The review team recommends that WWETB develop a process that leads to the use of quantitative data that can be integrated into the decision-making processes at organisation and centre level.

## **Programme Monitoring & Review**

The Self-Evaluation Report states (p.125) that "Programme level monitoring and review forms part of the work of Centre Managers, their staff teams, and respective FET Managers. All aspects of programme delivery are addressed through scheduled staff meetings and FET Coordinators and Principals report on programmatic developments and challenges at scheduled meetings with their respective FET Managers. Courses are reviewed at a modular level by learners and tutors via end of course evaluations. Such reviews help to gain insight into learner workload and delivery pace, the

success of certain teaching methodologies, the course assessment activity and any other issues that may have been encountered”.

WWETB adapts major award programmes with the inclusion of modules by request from the centre through the Programme Approval Process. Elements of the Common Award System (CAS) modules themselves, and Assessment Instrument Specifications (AISs), can be amended on a needs basis by the QA Team. These proposed changes are generally recommended by practitioners and enable errors to be addressed and obsolete references to be updated or removed. The QA Team save the latest versions of the WWETB branded Module and Programme Descriptors on the QA SharePoint site which is accessible to all FET Managers and QQI-QA personnel in centres.

The review team notes that this is an operational approach to programme monitoring and review for a large organisation and while this approach currently identifies operational updates and changes it is not an approach that will sustain the relevance and currency of WWETB programme provision going forward. This programme monitoring and review process coupled with a centre led programme development process, and the lack of a strategic led curriculum development unit as stated in the SER is an area identified by both the QA team and the review team as needing significant investment to marry the centre led operational work with a broader strategic lead approach to programme monitoring and review.

During the review meetings with the QA Steering Group, the Practitioners, the FET Coordinators, and the FET Managers and indeed with the learners the review team found there was a sense that curriculum changes are outside of the organisation’s control. This view is also outlined in the SER report on (p. 49) which states that QQI awards in use are more than ten years old. Feedback received during the consultation process suggested that a number of these awards are outdated to some degree and that a review of awards by QQI with a view to updating is required. It is also stated on the same page that QQI Programme Development and Validation while well-structured by QQI requires a substantial investment of resources by the provider. An example of this was WWETB’s attempt to put a Cloud Computing course in place. Respective QQI awards were too inflexible to efficiently facilitate this programme development. The review team also heard that other certification bodies have rigorous but less onerous processes in place.

The explanation offered to the review team is that the updating of module content and the introduction of new modules, for example updating Information Technology/Computer modules, developing new Level 1 and 2 ESOL modules are National FET curriculum issues. There were, however, some examples where WWETB had engaged with QQI to update some CAS modules to include the Level 5 payroll. It is apparent to the review team that practitioners and learners are aware of the use of outdated modules, in particular IT modules and while the learners could not see why this was the case, they also acknowledge that many of their teacher/tutors worked around the outdated curriculum content and make the learning as relevant as possible to their needs and current industry standards.

***Commendation:***

- The review team commends WWETB's ongoing monitoring and review of programme provision at centre level to ensure that their FET provision is meeting the evolving needs of their prospective learners, and employers.

***Recommendation:***

- The review team recommend that WWETB priorities resourcing programme development in their next Statement of Strategy (2023-2027). Specifically, the team recommends, that WWETB resource and devise a timeframe to marry the centre led operational work with a broader strategic approach to programme monitoring and review.

## Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

The WWETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER) states (p.132) that working relationships are in place with a wide range of statutory, non-statutory, national, and local stakeholders including SOLAS, QQI, DSP Community Training Centres (CTC), Local Training Initiatives (LTI) and Second Providers (Contracted Training and Specialist Training Providers (STP) including the National Learning Network. The organisation endeavours to systematically monitor and retain diligent oversight of these relationships as appropriate. Collaborative provision is governed by service-level agreements, operating guidelines, and procedures or 'agreements to collaborate' (LTIs), in each case to ensure the transparency and integrity of the relationship. For example, when contracted trainers are delivering training on behalf of a training centre, they do so under the ETB's QA agreement. These collaborations are subject to monitoring and review by the Training Standards Officer to ensure compliance with programme specifications, quality assurance and certification standards.

WWETB have an Audit and Risk Committee to safeguard against the failure of control measures or the emergence of risk, particularly where the use and distribution of funding is concerned.

A new tendering process developed by the Office of Government Procurement has almost been completed and will come into effect in 2022 (Provider Profile 2021 p.44). Successful contractors who win the tender, may work with WWETB training centres for up to four years.

The provision of craft apprenticeship programmes is subject to annual independent monitoring by the WWETB Authorised Officer and SOLAS based Quality Assurance Services (QAS) unit. Examiners and External Authenticators when required are contracted in line with external and internal quality assurance policies (SER p.134).

The internal verification process is undertaken by both the contracted trainer and the Training Standards Officer (TSO), and the training centre organises the EA from the training centre EA panel.

Contracted training providers are monitored on a monthly basis by the Contracted Training Officer, and there is a traffic light system in place to monitor underperforming contractors (Provider Profile 2021 p.44).

During the meeting with second providers, the review team heard of examples of good QA and monitoring practices include assessment oversight from WWETB, spot check of exams, skills demonstration and learner feedback mechanisms. It was also highlighted that for contractual and IT security reasons second provider practitioners do not have access to WWETB QA SharePoint site and digital resources. A change in this policy would be welcomed to support and enhance the programme delivery of this FET provision.



The review team heard that there is no standardised approach to review performance, each second provider has their own performance reviews and notifies WWETB as early as possible of any significant and recurring issues. KPIs are monitored but not set uniformly and if there is an unexpected trend then this is discussed with the ETB and agreed adjustments are made as appropriate.

During the review team's meeting with the FET management team, it was reported that the QA Team conduct an induction with every tutor employed by contracted Training/Second providers. If there is a breach in an assessment procedure, then the QA team carry out an investigation and prepare a report on their findings. The review team were informed that removal of the tutor or contract trainers is possible.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) (p. 122) acknowledge that the practice of evaluating the effectiveness of their relationships with industry bodies is a process that currently does not formally happen across all of their provision; however, the SER also acknowledge that an evaluation of the relationships that exist between their wider FET provision and employers, merits consideration. For example, establish a formal consultation process to capture information about skills sets/competencies employers see as required for specific industry because in response to the SER survey question to ascertain if employers have been consulted showed that 47% of responded said there has not been such an opportunity.

During the review team meeting with the Employers and Regional Skills Bodies Representatives the review team discussed a number of good industry initiatives such as the Dungarvan College partnership with GSK, the TEVA onsite course for employee (a 2 day-course in digital manufacturing). These initiatives support an overall view from employers that WWETB is listening to the needs of local business and that their change in approach is being felt on the ground – “WWETB now with a ‘can do’ attitude, shorter courses, modular elements, therefore employers feel listened to/involved”.

The review team note that there are no formal impact measurements at regional level in the documentation provided by the WWETB or during the review meetings and the use of data to drive provision is not very common. However, the good practices evidenced, and the oral feedback provided by regional stakeholders indicated that WWETB are actively collaborating with their regional partners.

**Commendation:**

- The review team commends WWETB's Contractor Training/Second Provider process to ensure compliance with their programme specifications, quality assurance and certification standards.



Section

4

# Section 4: Conclusions

The core objective of the review team was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of WWETB's quality assurance system. As this was the inaugural review, it had a particular emphasis on the arrangements established to date to support the operation of the quality assurance system. The review team recognises that the development and implementation of an ETB-wide quality assurance system and procedural framework is an ongoing process. However, the review also had a forward-looking dimension to explore WWETB's plans and infrastructure to support the ongoing development of these systems.

The review team are of the opinion that the SER and the outcomes from the review meetings affirmed WWETB's commitment to quality assurance; this is exemplified through the significant and ongoing investment and development of a QA Service Unit with committed specialist QA staff. There was also evidence of QA governance and oversight structures throughout with some evidence to confirm that the implementation and oversight of QA across the organisation is working.

The review team concludes that WWETB has made significant progress since 2013 in improving, aligning and, where appropriate, standardising the QA system, processes and practices. The Self Evaluation report shows evidence of the establishment of strong quality assurance governance structures and oversight processes. However, as indicated in the SER, there is still significant further work and identified actions yet to be done. The outcome of the inaugural review process confirms this status, and the review team believes that to complete this QA journey, WWETB need to continue with good practices identified in the SER and in the commendations below. To address the further work and actions outlined in the SER and the recommendations below they must develop a detailed roadmap with realistic timelines. Identifying the 'action owners' will be imperative given that some of the significant actions will require major investment and additional resources over a number of years.

## 4.1 Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

The review team is satisfied that WWETB have well established arrangements in place to support the operation of their quality assurance system. The implementation of the mission statement message across all service provision to include further education colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers and collaborative partnerships/arrangements was evident, with particular points of strength recognised. Firstly, the willingness of people to work together and secondly, the presence of effective communications throughout the WWETB microcosm both

internally and externally. The review team note that WWETB's aspirations to achieve Quality, Inclusivity, Responsiveness & Innovation are ongoing objectives that the organisation continues to integration across the FET service provision.

## **4.2 Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment**

It is evident to the team that WWETB is committed to providing appropriate learning environments and supports to a diverse range of learners. Central to WWETB's FET provision is the establishment of high-quality and fit-for-purpose facilities for learners and staff. In addition to this, the furnishing of these facilities with the highest quality ICT infrastructure, including high-speed broadband, wireless networks, cloud-based storage, internet usage protocols and policies, are expressed commitments of the organisation in the Strategy Statement 2018-2022. The review team also saw evidence of ongoing development of assessment policies and procedures. Practitioners indicated their support for the standardisation of QA policies and procedures and the digital support provided during the Covid-19 pandemic. The learners described Teachers/Tutors as helpful and supportive with their learning and assignment work, particularly, during the recent Covid-19 pandemic. They also welcomed the formal and informal advice about employment and progression opportunities. The review team note the need for further development of staff capacity and capability to meet the ongoing challenges in programme and curriculum development and consideration of seeking more devolved responsibility from QQI on programme development.

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

The evidence of the statements reported in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) are mainly based on the analysis of the responses received to a survey covering all aspects connected to the management and development of the Quality Assurance system. The survey results focus group outcomes and the review meeting discussions were conducted with internal and external stakeholders which limited the analysis and conclusions to inward focused process. The evidence of the achievement of strategic objectives are also based only on qualitative indicators, while quantitative targets are lacking. Some quantitative data is collected but there is no evidence of decision-making based on these performance indicators. Going forward an institutional data set is needed, that is fully understood, and consistently used, throughout the organisation to inform evidenced based strategic and operational decision making.

## 4.4 Commendations:

1. The review team commends the WWETB's commitment to quality improvement through identifying effective practice, challenges, and potential future enhancement in each subsection of the report.
2. The review team commends WWETB's progress in terms of bringing together a wide variety of service providers and associated support staff whilst gaining the respect and authority of those involved to allow the ongoing development of WWETB educational provision.
3. The review team commends WWETB inclusion of a Quality Team in the revised Governance and Oversight structures, who are working systematically to develop and embed an overarching QA Framework to support the provision of a diverse range of quality assured educational programmes across all service provision.
4. The review team commends WWETB's QA Team who are delivering a very valuable internal service to the organisation that is effective and supports the learners, practitioners, FET Centre Managers/Coordinators and 2nd Providers on the ground.
5. The review team commends that WWETB's QA Team on the development of the digital and online resources that now form part of the QA Framework to include the digital library of resources, CPD programmes for staff and the SharePoint site.
6. The review team commends WWETB initiation of self-directed actions in term of its HR Policy development to include the appointment of a Professional Learning Development (PLD) coordinator and the engagement of a consultancy firm to carry out a generalised HR review. These actions demonstrate that Staff Recruitment, Development and Management are important to the WWETB and are considered necessary to achieve identified targets and priorities.
7. The review team commends WWETB on their innovative programme developments such as the NZEB project and the Digital Assisted Eco Driving course that are addressing the National FET strategic priorities to include the evolving needs of the economy and upskilling employees.
8. The review team commends WWETB's use of data and labour market information for the Bunclody Regional Plan and Dungarvan Northwest Regional Plan. They are good examples of using a structured and evidence-based approach to course and programme development.

9. The review team commends WWETB's access, transfer and progression examples evidenced in the SER and their commitment to ensuring that access, transfer and progression is an integral element to course development and to the achievement of Local and National FET priorities.
10. The review team commends WWETB for appointing an Access and Disability Officer, and their commitment to formally assessing all FET learners prior to course commencement by 2024.
11. The review team commends WWETB's revised Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with HEIs that gives greater access to the broader WWETB learner cohorts.
12. The review team commends WWETB's ongoing work to create policies, procedures, and systems to support the integrity of assessment and approval of learner results. The review team noted that this work is valued by all practitioners interviewed and demonstrates a commitment to an organisation wide QA culture.
13. The review team commends WWETB's commitment to the use of data to inform strategic decision making. This is exemplified through their approaches to developing Local Education and Training Development Plans (e.g., Bunclody Regional Plan and Dungarvan Northwest Regional Plan).
14. The review team commends the commitment by WWETB to ensure compliance with data legislation and the integrity of learner records.
15. The review team commends the development of the WWETB QA SharePoint to store and channel necessary information facilitating timely analysis of data and subsequent decision making.
16. The review team commends WWETB's provision of appropriate resources to support the communications processes. The communications structures in terms of policy, resources and technology are well thought through and implemented effectively.
17. The review team commends WWETB's ongoing commitment to resourcing high-quality and fit-for-purpose facilities for learners and staff, including the addition of an Access and Disability officer to the QA Team and plans for the development of a "FET College of the Future" in Wexford.

18. The review team commends WWETB's support structures, both formal and informal, that were evidenced to support staff and learners and their commitment to providing working and learning environments that are safe and comfortable for staff and learners.
19. The review team commends WWETB for the ongoing development of assessment policies and procedures. The outcome of WWETB's SER indicates good performance in the delivery and assessment of learning which was also verified at many of the review meetings.
20. The review team commends the ongoing work carried out by coordinators, teachers, tutors, instructors, and specialist support services in supporting their learners.
21. The review team commends WWETB COVID-19 emergency contingency plans and responses that ensured that technical and other supports including mental health support were provided to all learners.
22. The review team commends WWETB's ongoing monitoring and review of programme provision at centre level to ensure that their FET provision is meeting the evolving needs of their prospective learners, and employers.
23. The review team commends WWETB's Contractor Training/Second Provider process to ensure compliance with their programme specifications, quality assurance and certification standards.



## 4.5 Recommendations:

1. The review team recommends that WWETB develop a detailed action plan that clearly identifies the 'action owners' with realistic timelines. This is particularly relevant for some of the more significant actions identified in the SER which will require major investment and additional resources.
2. The review team recommends that WWETB review and update the mission statement to ensure it fully reflects the key pillars of their next Strategy Statement 2023-2027.
3. The review team recommends that WWETB establish key performance metrics to enhance future annual service plans.
4. The review team recommends that WWETB develop a new method of engagement with stakeholders (internal and external) to further enhance its capacity to identify emerging needs and to develop services to address same.
5. The review team recommend that WWETB take a more strategic approach to quality assurance. Based on the size of the organisation and the diversity of provision, the QA overarching function needs to operate at a higher executive level and be integrated within the senior management strategic planning and monitoring process.
6. The review team recommends that WWETB use a broader database, for example, sector comparisons with other ETB and/or their European VET counterparts to inform the setting of benchmarks. This would offer an external element to the evaluation of the Quality Assurance Framework to include the effectiveness of policies and procedures.
7. The review team recommends that WWETB, in the absence of a national framework for PMDS in the sector, consider developing a formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system to support staff and to enhance their skills and qualifications as they progress through their careers.
8. The review team recommends that WWETB develop systematic processes to share good practice developed in parts of the organisation to support the quality and enhancement of all provision, for example, the innovative programme developments and the structured learner support services on apprenticeships programmes could better inform WWETB's approach to programme development and enhancement in other sections of their FET provision.

9. The review team recommends that WWETB develop as part of their QA framework a structured approach, with an appropriate infrastructure, that is fully resourced, to support curriculum/programme development across their FET provision.
10. The review team recommend that WWETB build QA capacity in order to seek devolved responsibility, from QQI, for programme development and approval.
11. The review team recommends that WWETB review of their current FET provision to enhance the development of their next Strategic Plan 2023-2027. WWETB's FET amalgamated services are now embedded in the organisation and it would be timely to review the provision to ensure WWETB continues and grows in their ability to actions strategic priorities identified in their Self Evaluation Report (SER).
12. The review team recommends that WWETB's develop formal systems to promote and track internal and external access, transfer and progression opportunities between and from each of their FET provisions.
13. The Review Team recommends that WWETB consider additional processes that could further enhance the overall QA monitoring and review process.
14. The review team recommends that WWETB develop a data strategy policy, to include clear organisational performance indicators, and that the ETB further develop their use of performance data in support of strategic decision-making.
15. The review team recommends WWETB continued investment in the data team and ongoing training to improve data literacy and interpretation across the organisation.
16. The review team recommends that WWETB continue to develop and enhance their communications strategies to support the effective promotion of educational services at organisation and centre level, for example, improve the consistency of industry links across the FET provision, increase student voice participation at Centre and ETB level, develop systematic learner, staff and external stakeholders feedback structures and organise information events for key external stakeholders.
17. The review team recommends that WWETB increase 'learner voice participation' in the QA governance and oversight processes and develop a system that is suitable and consistently implemented to capture and act on learner feedback, to include the learner experience, capturing and acting on learners' feedback during the programme and not only at the end of the programme.

18. The review team recommends that WWETB provide a more cohesive approach to the provision of learner supports, to ensure all learners have appropriate access to learning support services, to include counselling and psychotherapy services if deemed necessary.
19. The review team recommends that WWETB include a Teaching, Learning and Assessment group as part of the QA governance structure (see SER (p. 35, figure 2.3) to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB.
20. The review team recommends that WWETB make provision to formally facilitate staff to collaborate under the concept of “Communities of Practice” as stated in the SER on (p. 49) and to support a culture where individuals engaged in Professional Learning and Development (PLD) further share their learning with their peers in a more formal way as stated in the SER on (p. 108).
21. The review team recommends a review of the various aspects of learner support to ensure that there is a holistic, integrated and consistent offer that can meet the changing demands of their range learners and ensure there is clear referral and reporting mechanisms between services and their courses. This includes ensuring the services are well promoted and can be accessed confidentially and safely.
22. The review team recommends that WWETB develop an organisational lead learner support system that integrates with and supports centre/programme-based learner support systems.
23. The review team recommends that WWETB develop a system that can monitor, and review, learner supports on a regular basis to ensure they continue to meet evolving learners’ needs.
24. The review team recommend that WWETB priorities resourcing programme development in their next Statement of Strategy (2023-2027). Specifically, the team recommends, that WWETB resource and devise a timeframe to marry the centre led operational work with a broader strategic approach to programme monitoring and review.
25. The review team recommends that WWETB embed the culture of using data and regional information to inform strategic decisions. Consideration should be given to an overall strategic input process (across the WW Region); such an approach may be more beneficial in terms of the overall strategic direction of the ETB rather than just a local operational view.
26. The Review team recommends that WWETB give access to their QA digital resources, for example their QA SharePoint to the second providers that are delivering programmes under WWETB QA system.

## 4.6 Statements on Quality Assurance

The review team is satisfied based on a full review of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and additional relevant documentations supplied by WWETB, and the conclusions drawn from the review team's virtual meetings where a range of QA topics were discussed and explored with a broad range of staff and stakeholders that WWETB current quality assurance procedures are supporting the delivery of a diverse range of quality assured educational programmes across all FET service provision.

The review team acknowledge that the development and implementation of an ETB-wide quality assurance system and procedural framework is an ongoing process that needs further resourcing to effectively meet the evolving and emerging QA needs of the organisation.

Arising from the review team's virtual meetings and review of documentation, it concludes that WWETB existing quality assurance procedures are compliant with QQI's Quality Assurance guidelines and policies. Evidence provided supports the view that effective procedures are in place for the operation and management of the FET provision at centre and ETB level.

The review team acknowledges that WWETB have a clear understanding that access, transfer and progression is fundamental to course development, meeting the needs of learners and employers, and contributing to the achievement of National FET priorities. Going forward the review team encourage WWETB to develop formal systems to promote and track internal and external access, transfer, and progression opportunities between and from each of their FET provisions.

The review team found evidence of a broad range of good practice developments in parts of the organisation, going forward the review team encourage the sharing of good practices to better inform WWETB's approach to programme development and QA enhancement processes in other sections of their FET provision and using performance data in support of strategic decision-making.

Section

5

**ETB Review Response**

# Section 5: ETB Review Response

## WWETB Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report

WWETB welcomes the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Inaugural Review process and the external review carried out in November 2021 by the Independent Review Team, evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of quality assurance within WWETB. WWETB's overall experience of the review process was that it was fair and thorough, and we highly value the additional perspectives, experience and advice facilitated by this review. We would like to commend the professional, positive and constructive engagement between the Review Team and WWETB staff, learners and stakeholders.

Preparation for the self-evaluation process and the external review provided WWETB with an opportunity to critically appraise its activities, focusing on an all-encompassing evaluation of quality enhancement undertaken since the formation of WWETB in 2013. The learning and actions from the review process will drive WWETB's Quality Improvement Plan and work plans for the coming years and feed into the process of developing WWETB's Strategic Statement for the period 2023 to 2027.

We appreciate that the review team concludes that QA is a well-defined function within the organisation, understood and appreciated by all internal and external stakeholders. In turn, we are satisfied with the review team's assertion that WWETB's existing quality assurance procedures are compliant with QQI's Quality Assurance guidelines and policies at both centre and ETB level.

We welcome the commendations and recommendations in the report, the professional engagement that the Review Team displayed during its visit and the clear recognition of the professionalism here in WWETB.

We are pleased to note that:

- “review meetings affirmed WWETB's commitment to quality assurance; exemplified through the significant and ongoing investment and development of a QA Service, and evidence of QA governance and oversight structures”
- “The review team is satisfied that WWETB have well established arrangements in place to support the operation of their quality assurance system.”
- “The review team commends the WWETB's commitment to quality improvement through identifying effective practice, challenges, and potential future enhancement in each subsection of the report.”
- “It is evident to the team that WWETB is committed to providing appropriate learning environments and supports to a diverse range of learners.”

- “The review team also saw evidence of ongoing development of assessment policies and procedures. Practitioners indicated their support for the standardisation of QA policies and procedures and digital support.”

We acknowledge the recommendations from the report, a majority of which are also actions from the WWETB Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The SER actions and External Report recommendations will be reviewed to form our Quality Improvement Plan, inform strategy development and we will ensure review and implementation of all recommendations. We are particularly pleased that a number of the recommendations are already under development or nearing completion, specifically:

- “The review team recommends that WWETB develop a detailed action plan that clearly identifies the ‘action owners’ with realistic timelines.”
- “The review team recommends that WWETB establish key performance metrics to enhance future annual service plans. The review team recommends that WWETB develop a data strategy policy, to include clear organisational performance indicators, and that WWETB further develop their use of performance data in support of strategic decision-making.” *(An initial Data Management Policy, Report and Data Indicators have been approved by the FET Management Team, the first rollout of which will be issued in late February and these data reports are being widely used in Planning Meetings)*

WWETB is very much committed to a culture of quality and quality enhancement. Through the work of the Quality Unit, QA Steering Group and QA Coordinators Forum we are determined to strengthen and further enhance our quality culture by continuing to develop and refine relevant systems, policies and procedures.

WWETB would like to thank the members of the independent Review Team, especially the Chair and Coordinator, for their engagement with the review process and their constructive and collegial approach during the review. We also thank Quality and Qualifications Ireland for their guidance and support throughout the review process and for facilitating the smooth transition to virtual review. We also sincerely thank all our FET staff, learners, partners and external stakeholders for their genuine commitment, reflection and help in enhancing the culture of Quality within WWETB.

Kevin Lewis Ken Whyte

Chief Executive – WWETB Director of FET – WWETB

# 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 2017<sup>1</sup>. 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 ETB's

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<sup>1</sup> Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (QQI, 2019)



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 QCI 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
<b>1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews.</li> <li>• Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation. phases of the review.</li> <li>• Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them.</li> <li>• Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures.</li> <li>• Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB.</li> </ul>
<b>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.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e. how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance.</li> <li>• Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level.</li> <li>• Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards.</li> <li>• Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.</li> </ul>
<b>3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent.</li> <li>• Publication of clear timescales and terms of reference for review.</li> <li>• Evaluating, as part of the review, ETB reporting on quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible.</li> <li>• Publication of the individual ETB reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences.</li> <li>• Publication of sectoral findings and observations.</li> </ul>
<b>4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings.</li> <li>• The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning.</li> </ul>
<b>5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB.</li> <li>• Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence.</li> <li>• Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context.</li> <li>• Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation</li> </ul>

**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:

- i. 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
- ii. 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
- iii. 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;<sup>2</sup>
- 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.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

4.2 QQI will identify an appropriate team of reviewers for each review who are independent of the ETB with the appropriate skills and experience required to perform their tasks. This will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, teaching and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed 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<sup>3</sup>:

### 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.

## 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;
- 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
<b>Preparation</b>	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.	
<b>Self-Evaluation Report (SER)</b>	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
<b>Desk Review</b>	Desk review of the self-evaluation reports by the review teams.	Before initial meeting

Step	Action	Timeframe
<b>Initial Meeting</b>	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
<b>Planning Visit</b>	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
<b>Main Review Visit</b>	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
<b>Individual ETB Reports</b>	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
<b>Outcomes</b>	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.	
<b>Follow-Up</b>	Preparation of an action plan by ETB.	1 month after QQI decision
	QQI seeks feedback from ETB on experience of review.	6 weeks after decision
	One-year follow-up report by ETB to QQI. This (and any subsequent follow-up) may be integrated into annual reports to QQI.	1 year after main review visit
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through annual reporting and dialogue processes.	Continuous

# Appendix B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Date: 15th November 2021				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator(s)/Director of FET	Alan O'Gorman, Alan Larkin, Ken Whyte		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting	Review Team only (QQI representative will join for some minutes)		
10.00-11.00 SaveTheDate Sent	1. ETB Chief Executive & SMT  In earlier reviews, the first 15 Minutes have been spent with ETB CE alone with the rest of the SMT then being admitted.	Kevin Lewis	Chief Executive	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
		Ken Whyte	Director of FET	
		Dr Karina Daly	Director of OSD	
		Eimear Ryan	Director of Schools	
		Michael O'Brien	Innovation & Development Manager	
		Alan O'Gorman	AEO/Quality Manager	
		Owen O'Mahony	Finance Manager	
11:00-11.30am	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.30 - 11.45	Review Team Break			
11.45-12.30 SaveTheDate Sent	2. Self-Evaluation Steering Group (8 of 15 members)	Alan Larkin	QA Officer / Self-Evaluation Lead	Discussion of the development of the self-evaluation report
		Jon Ishaque	Data Analytics	
		Sally Cunningham	FE Teacher	
		Gary Weldon	Instructor	
		Frank Murphy	Fulltime Learner	
		Joann Power	Learner Support / Skills for Work	
		Dr. Richard Hayes (WIT)	HEI & External	
		Fran Kennedy	AEO	

12.30-1pm	Panel Review Team Meeting			
1pm- 2pm	Review Team Lunch/Break			
2pm-2.45pm	<b>4. Parallel sessions with learners, including learners (max 3 groups)</b>			Discussion of learner experience
	<b>Parallel session 1 (unaccredited provision and Level 1-3 FET provision, Community Ed, Adult Lit, ESOL, Youthreach)</b>	Tom Connery	Community Ed, Ramsgrange Men's Shed - Unaccredited	
		Tiffany Loftus	Youthreach Dungarvan	
		Liam Lannigan	Singing Chefs - Unaccredited	
		Maurice Sammon	Adult Literacy- Tramore	
		Mary Devereux	Adult Literacy- Wexford	
		Bernard O'Leary	Adult Literacy- Wexford	
	<b>Parallel session 2 (Level 4-6 FET provision, BTEI, VTOS, PLC, LTI/CTC)</b>	Ross Sutton	Courtown LTI	
		Carmel Cash	GYI Level 5	
		Therese Doran	Waterford VTOS 2nd Year Craft	
		Natalie Walsh	Connect Programme LTI	
		Jade Haberlin	Connect Programme LTI	
		Corrina Hannigan	WCFE	
		Alex Reed	BTEI Wexford	
		Sean Mularkey	Dungarvan PLC Sport & Rec	
	Johnny Magee	WCFE Social Studies		
2.45-3pm	Review Team Break			
3pm-3.45pm	<b>Parallel session 3 (Apprentices &amp; other WB learners)</b>	Eoin Murphy	Electrical Apprentice - Gary Weldon	

		Cian O'Reilly	C & J Apprenticeship - Gary Cowman	
		Sean Deay	C & J Apprenticeship - Gary Cowman	
		Aishling McPartland	Cleanroom Trainee	
		Adam Prendergast	Welding Fabrication	
		Jeffrey O'Keefe	HGV Driving	
		David Scannell	Plumbing Apprentice	
	<b>Parallel session 4 (Past Graduates in HE or employment)</b>	Billy Sharpe	Gourmet Butter	
		Evan Stapleton	Architectural Metalwork	
		Frank Murphy	Cycle Tours	
		Majella Kervick	"Mise by Majella" Jewellery	
		Jack Quinn	WIT	
3.45-4.15pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
4.15pm-4.30pm	Review Team Break			
4.30-5.15pm	<b>5. Parallel sessions with LEARNING PRACTITIONERS (max 3 groups)</b>			Discussion of staff involvement in teacher, learning and assessment, quality assurance and enhancement
	<b>Parallel session 1 (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learning practitioners)</b>	Linda Levingstone	CE Tutor	
		Ingrid Arfa	ESOL Tutor	
		Susan Kiely	Adult Literacy Tutor	
		Siobhain Grimes	Community Training/LTI Practitioner	



	<b>Parallel session 2 ( L4- 5-6 Learning Practitioners)</b>	Sally-Ann Cunningham	PLC & VTOS Teacher WCFE	
		Lisa Brennan	Wexford BTEI Tutor	
		Anne-Marie Cooper	New Ross VTOS Teacher	
		Mairead Breen	PLC Teacher Kennedy College	
		Chris Furlong	LTI Coordinator	
	<b>Parallel session 3 (Apprenticeship &amp; other WBL instructors), 6 Learning practitioners from apprenticeships, traineeships and other work-based learning FET Provision</b>	Gary Weldon	Electrical Instructor	
		Gary Cowman	Gary Cowman	
		Michael Kelly	Mick Kelly	
		Brendan Murphy	Contracted Trainer	
		John O'Leary	SST , FabLab	
		Eimear Doyle (CT Tutor)	NZEB	
<b>5.15pm-5.45pm</b>	<b>Panel Review Team Meeting</b>	QQI representative will join to discuss any support needs.		

<b>Date: 16th November 2021</b>				
<b>Theme: TBD (Day 2)</b>				
<b>Time (GMT)</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator			Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
10.00-10.45 SaveTheDate Sent	<b>6. Data Analytics &amp; Programme Learner Support System</b>	Jon Ishaque	Data Analytics Coordinator	Data Analytics & Programme Learner Support System
		Jim O'Hanlon	PLSS Coordinator	
		Alan Larkin	Quality Assurance Officer	
		Alan O'Gorman	AEO/Quality Manager	
		Ken Whyte	Director of FET	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break			
11.30-12.15PM	<b>7. Parallel sessions with FET Coordinators</b>			
SaveTheDate sent for both	<b>Parallel Session 1: Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators - Unaccredited/level 1-3 provision</b>	Sarah Lavan	AEO Adult Literacy & ESOL	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Liz Duffy	AEO Youth	
		Siobhan Connors	Adult Literacy Organiser	
		Deborah Butler	Community Education Facilitator	
		Mary Waters	ESOL Coordinator	
		Edel Walsh	Assistant QA Officer	

	<b>Parallel Session 2 - Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators Level 4-6 provision (including training provision)</b>	Mary Walsh O'Shea	AEO Full Time Programmes, BTEI & VTOS	
		Fran Kennedy	AEO Community	
		Mary Upton	BTEI Coordinator Tramore/Co Waterford	
		Patricia Daly	VTOS Coordinator Kilmacthomas	
		Noreen Reilly	PLC Principal	
		John Cassidy	Training Manager	
12:15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
12.45pm-1.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break			
.45-2.30pm SaveTheDate Sent	<b>8. Second Providers (e.g. Representatives of Training Contractors, LTIs, CTCs)</b>	Paul O'Brien	CTC Coordinator	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		Niamh Fitzgerald	Impact Training Manager	
		Kitty Galvin Hennessy	NLN Waterford Manager	
		Noel Hackett	Community Training Officer	
		Eda Ryan	Training Standards Officer - Community	
		Michael Kennedy	Connect Programme LTI Coordinator	
		Helen Kavanagh	Dunhill LTI Coordinator	
2:30-3pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
3:00-3.15pm	Review Team Break			
3.15pm-4pm	<b>9. Parallel sessions with external stakeholders (max 3 groups)</b>			
	<b>Parallel session 1 (Collaborating Providers)</b>	Fiona Kieran	MSLETB	
		Anne Higgins	GRETB	

	<b>Parallel session 2 (Higher Education)</b>	Elizabeth O'Brien	LIT/TUS - NZEB	Discussion of quality assurance arrangements for collaborative programmes	
		Fiona Fay (DDLETB)	ELC		
		Joanne Morrissey	SOLAS		
		Michael O'Brien	WWETB Innovation & Development Manager		Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs, including consideration of ATP
		Dr Siobhan Ryan	IT Carlow		
		Dr. Richard Hayes WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology		
		Noreen Reilly	PLC Principal		
	<b>Parallel session 3 (Community Providers &amp; Groups, including representatives of Cooperation Hours)</b>	Fran Kennedy	AEO Community	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups	
		Jonathan King	Bunclody Men's Sheds		
		Glenn Lynch	Brill FRC		
4:00-4.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting				
4:30-4.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break				
4.45-5.30pm SaveTheDate Sent	<b>10. Professional, Corporate and Administration Services (Finance, HR and Facilities/IT)</b>	Owen O'Mahony	Head of Finance	Discussion of the relationship between the ETB's quality assurance system and its professional functions	
		AnneMarie Jones	Head of Human Resources		
		Dr Karina Daly	Director of OSD		
		David Guiney	Head of ICT		
		Fintan O'Reilly	Corporate Service Manager		
		Anne-Marie Toomey	Digital Learning Coordinator		
		Paul Fallon	PLD Coordinator		

5.30pm-6pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
<b>Date: 17th November 2021</b>				
<b>Theme: TBD (Day 3)</b>				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator			Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
10:00am-10:45am SaveTheDate Sent	<b>11. WWETB Strategic Regional Planning</b>	Ken Whyte	Director of FET	Discussion of role of strategic regional planning in programme and course provision and development
		Fran Kennedy	AEO Community	
		Jason Ryan	Deputy Principal Dungarvan College	
		Trevor Sinnott	STB Manager / Skills to Advance	
		Jon Ishaque	Data Analyst	
		Alan O'Gorman	Quality Manager	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break			
11.30-12.15	<b>12. Staff &amp; Employers involved in programme development and review</b>	Paul Doran	Agriculture Programme Coordinator	Discussion of staff & employer involvement in <b>programme development &amp; review</b>
		Clare Kelly	ELC Programme Coordinator	
		Tomas O'Leary	NZEB - Mosart	
		Margaret Cox	Ice Group	
		Lisa Doyle	VTOS Wexford Teacher	
		Colin McCarthy	Training Standard Officer	
		Edel Walsh	Assistant QA Officer	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting			
12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break			
1.45-2.30		Pat Logan	TEVA	Discussion of the engagement of employers
		Ciara O'Reilly	GSK	

	<b>13. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives</b>	Katie Harrington	Suir Engineering	and regional skills bodies in strategic planning and programme provision.
		Eleanor McGrath	Le Cheile Childcare	
		Carrie Rockett	Integer, New Ross	
		Edmond Connolly	South East Regional Skills Manager (TBC)	
		Liz Hore	Wexford County Council	
2.30-3.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
3.15-3.30	Review Team Break			
3.30-4.15 SaveTheDate Sent	<b>14. ETB Employer Engagement Function</b>	Trevor Sinnott	Services To Business Manager	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local skills needs and quality assuring provision
		MOB	WWETB Innovation & Development Manager	
		Ken Whyte	Director of FET	
		Noreen O'Reilly	PLC Principal	
		Alan Larkin	Assistant QA Officer	
		Mary Walsh O'Shea	AEO BTEI & VTOS	
		Jason Ryan	Deputy Principal Dungarvan College	
		Nichola Long	Unit Training Manager	
4.15-4.45	Private Review Team Meeting			

<b>Date: 18th November 2021</b>				
<b>Theme: TBD (Day 4)</b>				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Alan O'Gorman, Alan Larkin	ETB Review Coordinators	Meeting with ETB

				Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting			
10.00-10.45 SaveTheDate Sent	<b>15. Pathways - Information, Recruitment, Access and Guidance</b>	Peter Lucey	FET Guidance Counsellor	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression
		Aisling Cusack	FET Guidance Information Officer	
		Sarah Lavan	AEO - Access & Disability	
		Helen Hogan	Guidance Counsellor Dungarvan College	
		Trevor Sinnott	Services to Business Manager	
		Joe Dreelan	TS Recruitment	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting			
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break			
11.30-12.15pm SaveTheDate Sent	<b>16.FET Management Team (Overarching Governance for Quality, including Programme Approval Committee)</b>	Ken Whyte	FET Director	Discussion of the approach to, and mechanisms for, quality assurance and enhancement
		Shay Cummins	Unit Manager Training	
		Michael O'Brien	Innovation & Development Manager	
		Mary Walsh O'Shea	AEO	
		Danny Cunningham	PLC Principal Dungarvan College	
		Alan O'Gorman	AEO - Quality Manager	
		John Cassidy	Training Manager	
12.15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
12.45-1.45pm	Review Team Break			
1.45-2.30pm SaveTheDate Sent	<b>17. Quality Steering Group</b>			
	<b>QA Steering Group</b>	Alan Larkin	Quality Assurance Officer FE	Discussion of role of committee in
		Aislinn Brennan	Enniscorthy VTOS Coordinator	
		Mark Fitzsimons	PLC Coordinator Dungarvan College	

		Jackie Browne	Adult Literacy Organiser	quality assurance of FET Division
		Alan O'Gorman	AEO - Quality Manager	
		Colin McCarthy	TSO Apprenticeship & Contracted Training	
		Eda Ryan	TSO Community Training	
		Fran Kennedy	Community AEO	
		Nichola Long	Unit Manager Training	
2.30pm-3pm	Private Review Team Meeting			
3:00-3:15PM	Review Team Break			
3.15PM-4PM SaveTheDate Sent	<b>18. Quality Team</b>	Alan Larkin	Quality Assurance Officer FE	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality
		Colin McCarthy	TSO Apprenticeship & Contracted Training	
		Eda Ryan	TSO Community Training	
		Edel Walsh	Assistant Quality Assurance Officer FE	
		Jim Kenneally	ATSO Apprenticeship & Contracted Training	
		Mary O'Connor	ATSO Community Training	
		Alan O'Gorman	AEO - Quality Manager	
		Jon Ishaque	Data Analyst	
		Jessica Gill	Clerical Officer Training Standards	
4:00-4.30PM	Private Review Team Meeting			
4.30pm-4.45pm	Review Team Break			
4.45-5.30PM	<b>19. Learner Support &amp; Guidance</b>	Joann Power	Learner Support/ Skills for Work Coordinator	Discussion learner supports and guidance
		Peter Lucey	Adult Guidance Coordinator	
		Mary Walsh O'Shea	AEO / Adult Guidance Manager	
		Sarah Lavan	Access & Disability Officer	



		Sonya O'Keeffe	Psychological Support Counsellor	
		Philip Cullinane	Adult Guidance Coordinator	
SaveTheDate Sent	Private Review Team Meeting			

Date: 19th November 2021				
Theme: Wrap-up				
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Role	Purpose
9-9.30	20. Free Session			To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
9.30-10.45am	Private Review Team Meeting	QQI representatives will join team at 10.15 for 15 minutes.		
10.45-11.30	21. Free Session			To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
11-11.30am	22. QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director	Alan O'Gorman, Alan Larkin, Ken Whyte		QQI gathers feedback on the review process (Review Team not in attendance)
11.30-12	Private Review Team Meeting			
12-12.30	23. Oral Feedback: Feedback presented by Review Team Chair. Attended by ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners	Kevin Lewis	CEO	Oral feedback on initial review findings
		Ken Whyte	Director of FET	
		Dr Karina Daly	Director of OSD	
		Eimear Ryan	Director of Schools	
		Alan O'Gorman	AEO - Quality Manager	
		Alan Larkin	QA Officer / Self-Evaluation Lead	
		Michael O'Brien	Innovation & Development Manager	
		SESG	Many	



# Glossary of Terms

## QQI glossary of terms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition/Explanation
<b>2012 Act</b>	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
<b>AONTAS</b>	Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation
<b>ATP</b>	Access, Transfer and Progression
<b>BTEI</b>	Back to Education Initiative
<b>CAO</b>	Central Applications Office
<b>CEDEFOP</b>	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Core</b>	Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, developed by QQI for use by all Providers
<b>ECVET</b>	European credit system for vocational education and training
<b>EQAVET</b>	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
<b>Erasmus+</b>	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
<b>ETB</b>	Education and Training Board
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>Fáilte Ireland</b>	Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>Moodle</b>	A free, open-source online learning management system (LMS) that supports learning and training needs
<b>NFQ</b>	National Framework of Qualifications

<b>PLC</b>	Post Leaving Certificate
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>QQI</b>	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
<b>SOLAS (formerly FÁS)</b>	The National Further Education and Training Authority (responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring FET in Ireland)
<b>SPA</b>	Strategic Performance Agreement (between the ETB & Solas)
<b>TEL</b>	Technology-Enhanced Learning
<b>Youthreach</b>	Service providing early school leavers without and formal qualifications with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience
<b>VECs</b>	Vocational and Education Committees (later became ETBs)