



*Purpose:* Without these amendments, QQI cannot introduce the International Education Mark (a cornerstone of the international education strategy); robustly regulate the international Higher Education and English Language Teaching sector (worth an estimated €1.7bn annually); or use the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to recognise international qualifications. This last obstacle means that a significant volume of qualifications that have high value in the labour market, such as those made by professional bodies, cannot be recognised nationally. Recognition in the NFQ can effectively communicate the quality and comparative standing of qualifications to employers and

individuals alike. It can also simplify the use of qualifications whose delivery is eligible to receive public funding.

*Aims:* We support the Department's aims to:

- give QQI the explicit authority to recognise awards within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- provide clarity on the scope of QQI's quality assurance responsibilities in relation to private and voluntary providers
- allow QQI to impose conditions on providers whose quality assurance procedures it approves
- facilitate the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM)
- provide for improved and workable procedures for the protection of enrolled learners
- provide a clearer basis for QQI to examine the *bona fides* of providers
- involve providers more centrally in the application process for recognition of prior learning
- clarify the basis for QQI to charge relationship fees
- increase the size of the Board of QQI

**3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?**

The Department could, as part of the FET Strategy, explore how to strengthen the vocational dimension of secondary level education to create a viable, credible and valued learning route. This could also support 5 below.

In higher education, we welcome the imminent publication of the Cassells report on the Future Funding of Higher Education. We underline the need for more investment to maintain quality as evidenced in our *Report on Quality in an Era of Diminishing resources* (2015)

<http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/QQI-publishes-Quality-in-an-Era-of-Diminishing-Resources-report.aspx>

**4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured.**

**5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise**

QQI's work intersects with many areas of the Department's work and that of many of its agencies, in particular the HEA and SOLAS. Departmental responsibility for policy relating to QQI lies in the Higher Education, Equity of Access and Qualifications Unit but QQI has a mandate across the continuum of education and skills.

- We see the positive impacts of the QQI/DES Management Framework Agreement - aligned with QQI's Corporate Plan and Strategy Statement - our bilateral Memoranda of understanding with the HEA and (the one currently in development) with SOLAS and the regular meetings between the Departmental MAC and the Heads of the education agencies.

- QQI welcomes the establishment of the Apprenticeship Council and looks forward to continuing to play an important role in assisting with the roll out of new apprenticeships.
- QQI welcomes the publication of the first FET Strategy and strongly supports the structures put in place to deliver the FET Implementation Plan.
- More joined-up thinking across the different units of the Department would not just support QQI's work but would bring greater coherence among different areas of policy, funding and agency work such as building capacity in the further education and training sector to underpin quality and meet the needs of learners, employers and society.
- Strong authoritative inter-Departmental structures are needed to drive, anticipate, regulate, enhance and fund international education. The existing High Level Group is currently not empowered to do this. The Department might take a lead in addressing this.
- More robust regulation to ensure that private providers of education are financially sound (in further, higher, English Language Teaching etc.) is necessary. This is a system-wide matter that cuts across a number of Government Departments and agencies and is impacted by international developments including immigration policies.

**6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018**

## **A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

### **1. Prioritising Early Years**

***(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).***

We note that the Department is undertaking a review of occupational profiles for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). QQI will review the standards for its ECCE awards to ensure that they align with the outcomes of that review. Both initiatives support the approach in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*.

***(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?***

***(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?***

### **2. Tackling Disadvantage**

***(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).***

***(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantage be measured?***

QQI has responsibility for ensuring that education and training providers establish procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners. It is important that policy measures at governmental and institutional level do not unnecessarily hinder the progress of learners through the education and training system.

***(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?***

### **3. Diversity and Choice for Parents**

***(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).***

***(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?***

***(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?***

### **4. Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools**

***(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).***

***(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?***

***(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?***

### **5. Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students**

*(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).*

*(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?*

*(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?*

## **6. Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities**

*(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).*

*(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?*

*(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?*

## **7. Special Needs Education**

*(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).*

*(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?*

*(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?*

## **8. Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future**

*(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).*

- i. There are limited mechanisms in Ireland in which labour market sectors and education and training institutions collaborate systematically. The Regional Skills Fora are potentially

<p>important new mechanisms for collaboration between employers and education. Consortia are currently developing occupational profiles for new apprenticeships (to be approved by the Apprenticeship Council). We suggest that it is timely to ask whether the State is willing to facilitate systematic collaboration between labour market sectors and education and training sectors to better address skills needs over time. If so, it would be helpful to identify what outcomes are expected of this and whether they might differ in accordance with the sector or type of education and training required.</p> <p>ii. Employers have signalled the importance of core English language education competences and associated communication skills in their recruitment practices. Consideration should be given to developing/introducing this as a core element of second level, further education and third level curricula.</p>
<p><b>(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?</b></p>
<p><b>(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?</b></p>

Submissions will be subject to the Freedom of Information Acts (details available at <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/FOI/>). Submissions may be published online, in which case particular information exempt under the Freedom of Information Acts, such as personal contact details and commercially-sensitive information, will be omitted. *By completing this consultation and submitting the information, you are indicating your consent to this approach.*