

External review of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) by the European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

September 2013

1. Background and Context

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training (including English language provision) in Ireland and validates programmes and makes awards to certain providers in these sectors.

QQI is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI was established in November 2012 by the amalgamation of the functions of four bodies that had both awarding and quality assurance responsibilities: the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI).

Three of these legacy agencies were previously reviewed against the ESG on the dates indicated and held full membership of ENQA, HETAC (granted 2000, renewed 2006), NQAI (2008) and IUQB (2009). Full membership of HETAC and NQAI was transferred to QQI as their legal successor on its legal establishment, in accordance with the decision of the ENQA Board on 14 September 2012.

Unlike HETAC, NQAI and FETAC, the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) was not a statutory body established by law but was a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. IUQB kept its membership until the end of December 2012.

The ENQA policy on amalgamation of agencies requires that the newly established agency undergoes an external ENQA coordinated review within two years of the amalgamation being completed.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This is a type A review, as defined in the Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent QQI fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether QQI should be accepted as a Full Member of ENQA.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting Full Membership.

### 3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-evaluation by QQI including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to QQI;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

#### 3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of five members: four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and are drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA). The nomination of the student member is asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members serves as the chair of the review.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide QQI with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the QQI review.

#### 3.2 Self-evaluation by QQI, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

QQI is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which QQI fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG. The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit.

### 3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

QQI will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2 days. The approved schedule shall be given to QQI one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by QQI in arriving in Dublin, Ireland.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and QQI.

### 3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to QQI within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If QQI chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by QQI, finalise the document and submit it to QQI and ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

## 4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

QQI will consider the expert panel's report and will published it on its website. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. QQI commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting, if requested, a progress report to the ENQA Board within two years of the decision by the ENQA Board.

## 5. Use of the report

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is to be used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether QQI has met the membership criteria/ESG.

The review report is to be considered as property of ENQA only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to QQI and ENQA and until the decision by the Board is made, the report may not be used or relied upon by QQI, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. QQI may use the report at its discretion only after the Board decision has been made.

Should the review report be used for applying to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

## 6. Budget

QQI shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,750 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,750 EUR
Fee of the 3 other panel members	8,250 EUR (2,750 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	5,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,250 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate)	6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, QQI will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to QQI if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	September 2013
Appointment of review panel members	October 2013
Self-evaluation completed	Beg March 2014
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	February-March 2014
Briefing of review panel members	March 2014
Review panel site visit	May 2014
Draft of evaluation report to QQI	Beg July 2014
Statement of QQI to review panel if necessary	Mid-July 2014
Submission of final report to ENQA	End July 2014
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of QQI	September 2014
Publication of report	September 2014