

Dr. Pádraig Walsh
Chief Executive
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
26/27 Denzille Lane
Dublin 2, Ireland

Helsinki, 25 September 2014

Subject: Full membership of QQI in ENQA

Dear Pádraig,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 15 September 2014, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm QQI Full membership of ENQA for five years from that date.

Though the ENQA Board concluded that QQI is in substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines, the Board would like to receive a follow-up report on the recommendations in the panel report (as outlined in the annex attached) within two years of its decision, i.e. by September 2016.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations for the re-confirmation of Full Membership of QQI.

Yours sincerely,



Helka Kekäläinen
Vice-President of ENQA

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, QQI is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

The main recommendation to QQI is to complete the merger as soon as possible and in the meanwhile to minimise the impact of the merging process on the functioning and image-building of the new Agency.

As part of the process of completion of the merger, QQI is recommended to address the following aspects as priorities:

- Development of the missing policy documents emerging from the Green Papers and White Papers and the consultations in progress; it is recommended that, within a matter of months (not years) there should no longer be “HETAC procedures” or “NQAI procedures”, but only fully-fledged QQI procedures in the activities and internal culture of QQI; QQI might wish to consider “upgrading” immediately the status of all policy documents and evaluation guides, making them QQI policies and procedures instead of HETAC or NQAI documents – even though most of these documents may be changed in the course of the revision process in progress;
- Development of QQI’s own website, as a common platform of information substituting the websites of the legacy agencies and showing all policy documents, criteria/procedures and decisions of QQI, irrespective of the legacy agency from which some of these procedures and decisions may have been taken over; users seeking e.g. institutional evaluation reports should not be referred much longer to the HETAC website, but should find it handily on the QQI site;
- Development of a comprehensive formalised system of internal quality covering all the various educational sectors under the purview of QQI, substituting this unified, homogeneous system to the current fragmentation of internal quality control – however solid these partial approaches may be in their respective areas.

In addition to this main recommendation, QQI is advised to pay special attention to the following areas:

- Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in order to clearly establish the sharing of tasks between the two bodies and coordinate their interaction with HEIs, in particular with respect to data collection by both agencies and to the Annual Dialogue Meeting (with QQI) and the Strategic Dialogue Meeting (with the HEA) meetings;

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- Reduction of the area of potential conflict of interest between QQI as evaluating body and QQI as awarding body; QQI is encouraged to devolve as much awarding power as possible to mature institutions, in order to limit the risks that the agency may be faced with cases where its dual role may undermine its credibility in the higher education community;
 - Development of system-wide analyses, in particular through disciplinary benchmarking and overall trends and issues in Irish higher education (in line with the national agenda for higher education and research set out by the Government);
 - Cautious development of the International Education Mark (IEM), in order to focus it on the most relevant quality indicators and avoid the IEM becoming a quality standard of its own (alongside institutional review and programme validation/accreditation), which might create some confusion in the projection of Irish quality seals towards the external world;
 - Extend the periodic dialogue with HEIs – that may not have to be annual but must be coordinated with the HEA – with a view to building up institutional strategies in line with quality enhancement, institutional profiles and national priorities;
 - Strengthen its follow-up procedures on the basis of all information available to it;
 - Develop a formalised, comprehensive system of data gathering and reporting in order to improve QQI’s accountability;
 - Strengthen the training programmes and retrain all experts for the new procedures and policies that will be published soon by QQI;
 - Strengthen and diversify the internationalisation of QQI’s structure and evaluation procedures.