

Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ireland

ENQA General Assembly *Dublin*, 25 October 2023

Bryan Maguire *Director of Integration*





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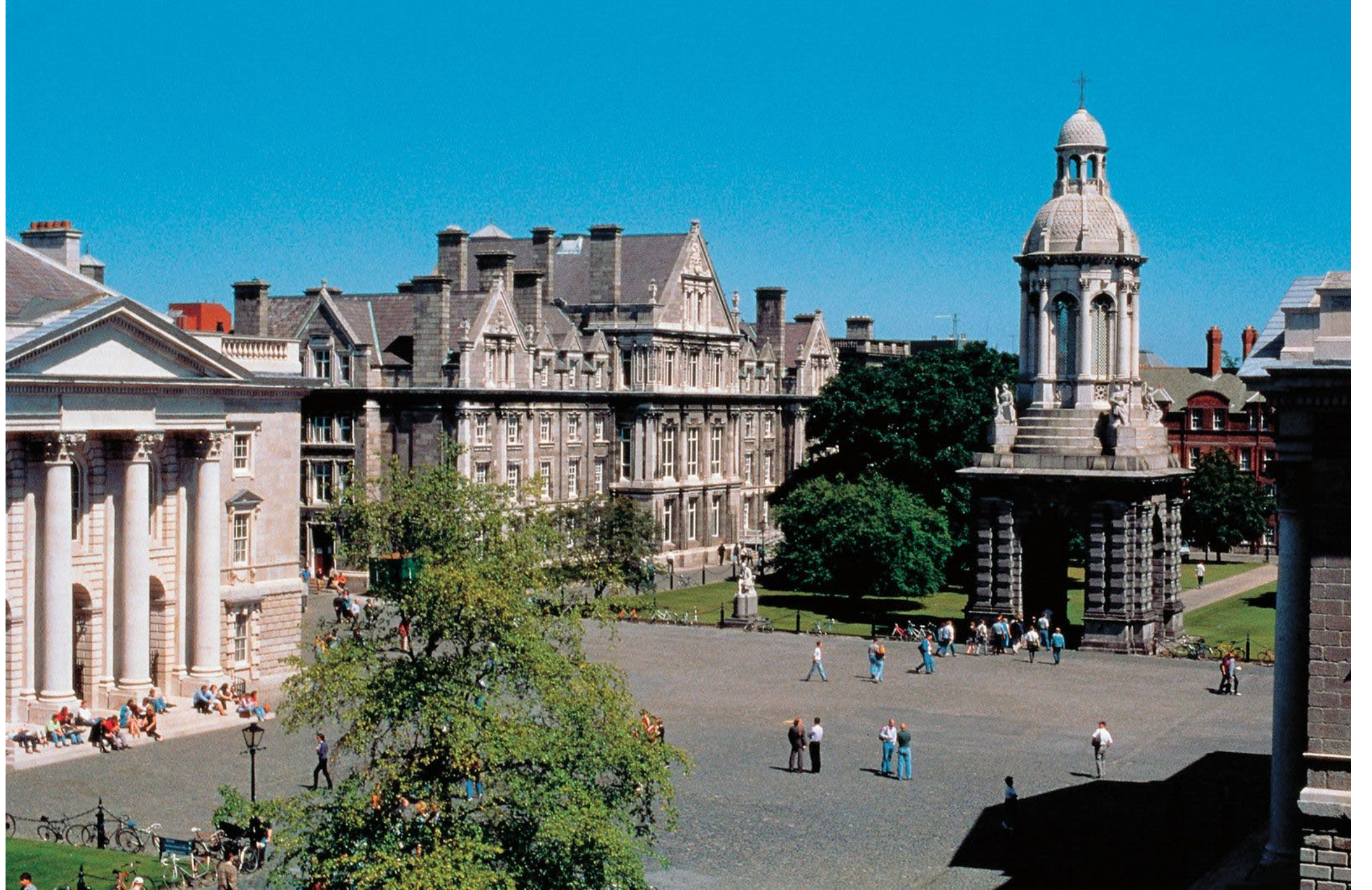
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LITTERARIA INSTRUXIT

ANNO

IN VIDERI VULTE



Ireland

- Population
- Educational attainment



An
Phríomh-Oifig
Staidrimh

Central
Statistics
Office

Population & Migration Estimates April 2023

5,281,600

Ireland's estimated
**Usually Resident
Population**



4,524,600

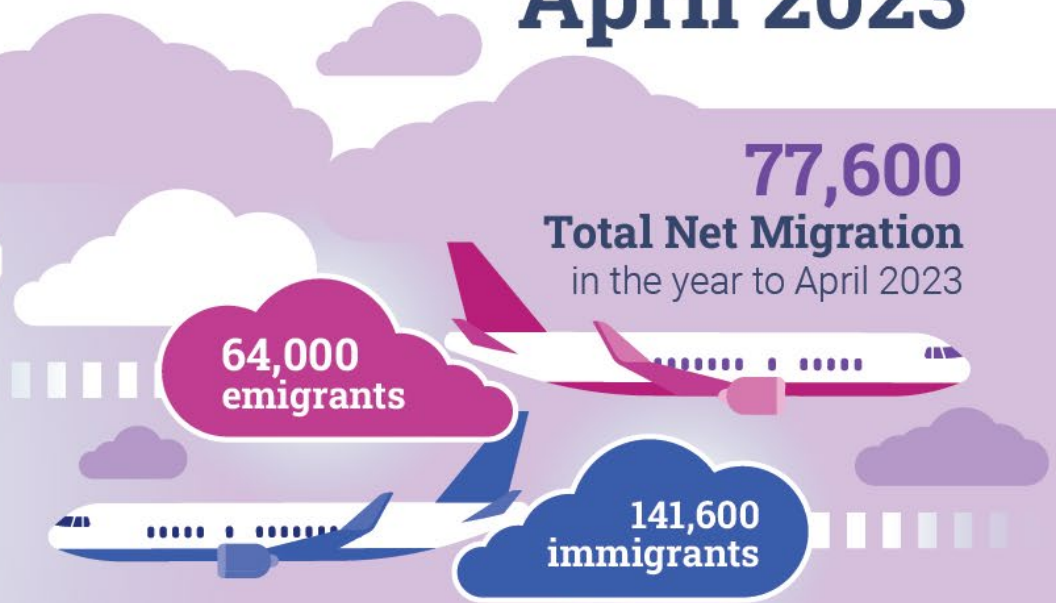
Irish citizens (85.7%)



757,000

Non-Irish citizens (14.3%)

806,300
people aged
65 and over –
an increase of 153,900
(23.6%) since 2017



Migration of **Irish citizens**

29,600 returned

to live in Ireland

30,500 left

to live abroad





Education Attainment Thematic Report 2022

Highest level of education attained by persons aged 25 - 64 years



3%

Primary only or no formal education



29%

Secondary education only



53%

Third level education

Primary only or no formal education

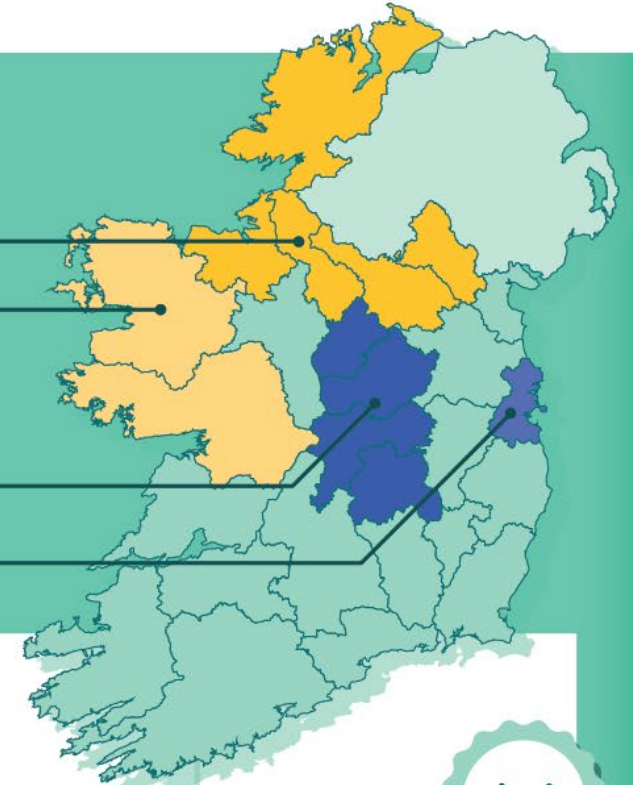
6% Border

3% West

Secondary education only

35% Midland

23% Dublin



2021

Percentage of persons with third level education

33%

EU-27 average

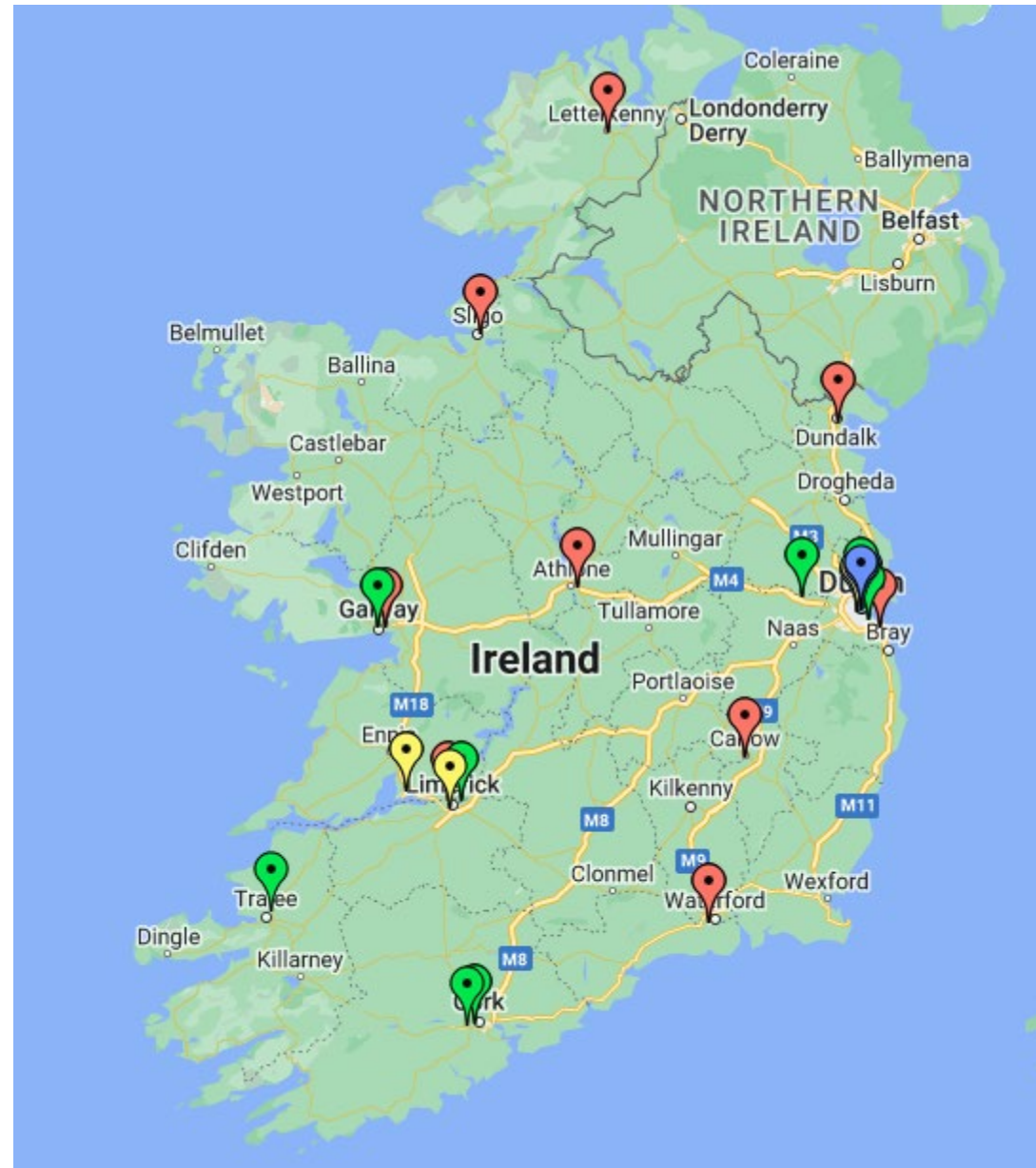


53%

Ireland



1st



Higher education institutions

- 7 universities
- 5 technological universities
- 2 institutes of technology
- 1 university of medical and health sciences
- 10 specialist colleges linked to universities
- 31 independent/private colleges



**An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta**
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority

HEA

HIGHER
EDUCATION
AUTHORITY



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

Regulation and quality assurance

- Department (DFHERIS) is responsible for tertiary strategy
- The tertiary strategic advisory, regulatory and funding authorities (SOLAS and HEA) have formal, statutory links with QQI and these are supported by memoranda of understanding
- Executives meet regularly
- QQI is independent as a quality assurance agency
- QQI has annual performance delivery agreement with DFHERIS
- Shared interest in collecting data from HEIs
- HEA has explicit responsibility for equality in HEIs

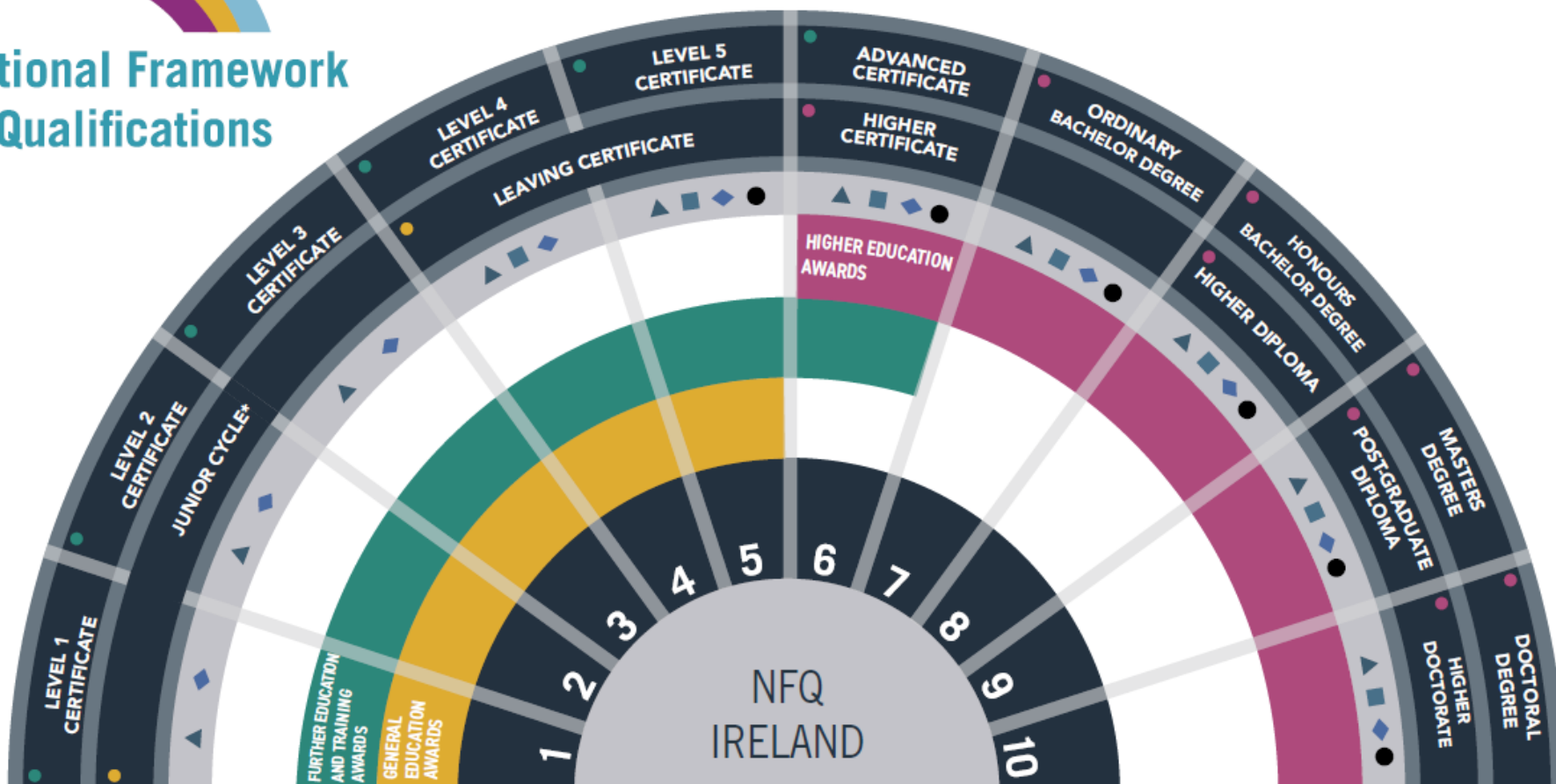
Functions of QQI

- Qualifications authority - custodian of national framework of qualifications
- Publishing authoritative information about quality and qualifications
- ENIC/NARIC for qualifications recognition advice
- Quality assurance of public degree awarding institutions
- Quality assurance and regulation of independent/private HEIs
- Validation of programmes and awarding qualifications for independent/private HE
- Quality assurance of Further Education and Training (post-secondary VET and adult education) institutions and awarding their qualifications
- [Quality assurance and regulation of English language schools]
- [Authorising use of international education mark in HE and English language]

QQI as an organisation

- 10 member board appointed by minister
- Supported by committees
 - Policy and standards
 - Approvals and reviews
 - Programmes and awards executive
 - Programmes and awards oversight
- 86 staff
- €12.1m
 - €6.6m fees from providers
 - €5.3m government grant
 - €0.3m EU projects and other

National Framework of Qualifications



CLASSES OF AWARD



Major Awards: named in the outer rings, are the principal class of awards made at a level



Minor Awards: are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award



Supplemental Awards: are for learning that is additional to a Major Award



Special Purpose Awards: are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



Professional Awards: are for occupation-orientated qualifications including apprenticeships

*Please refer to NCCA website, ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/

IRISH REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS

For more information on

- Qualifications
- Providers
- Courses

visit www.irq.ie



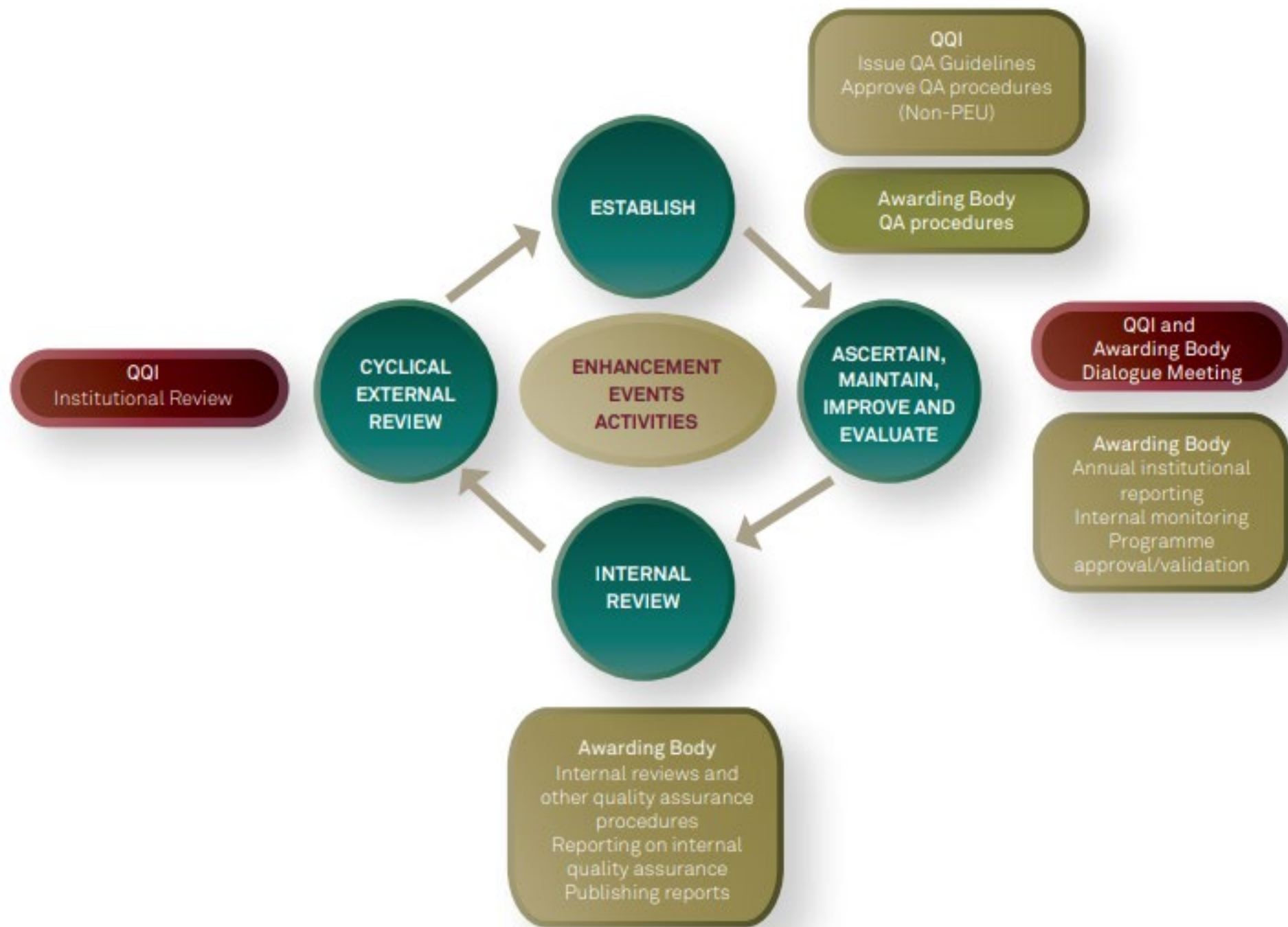
Supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

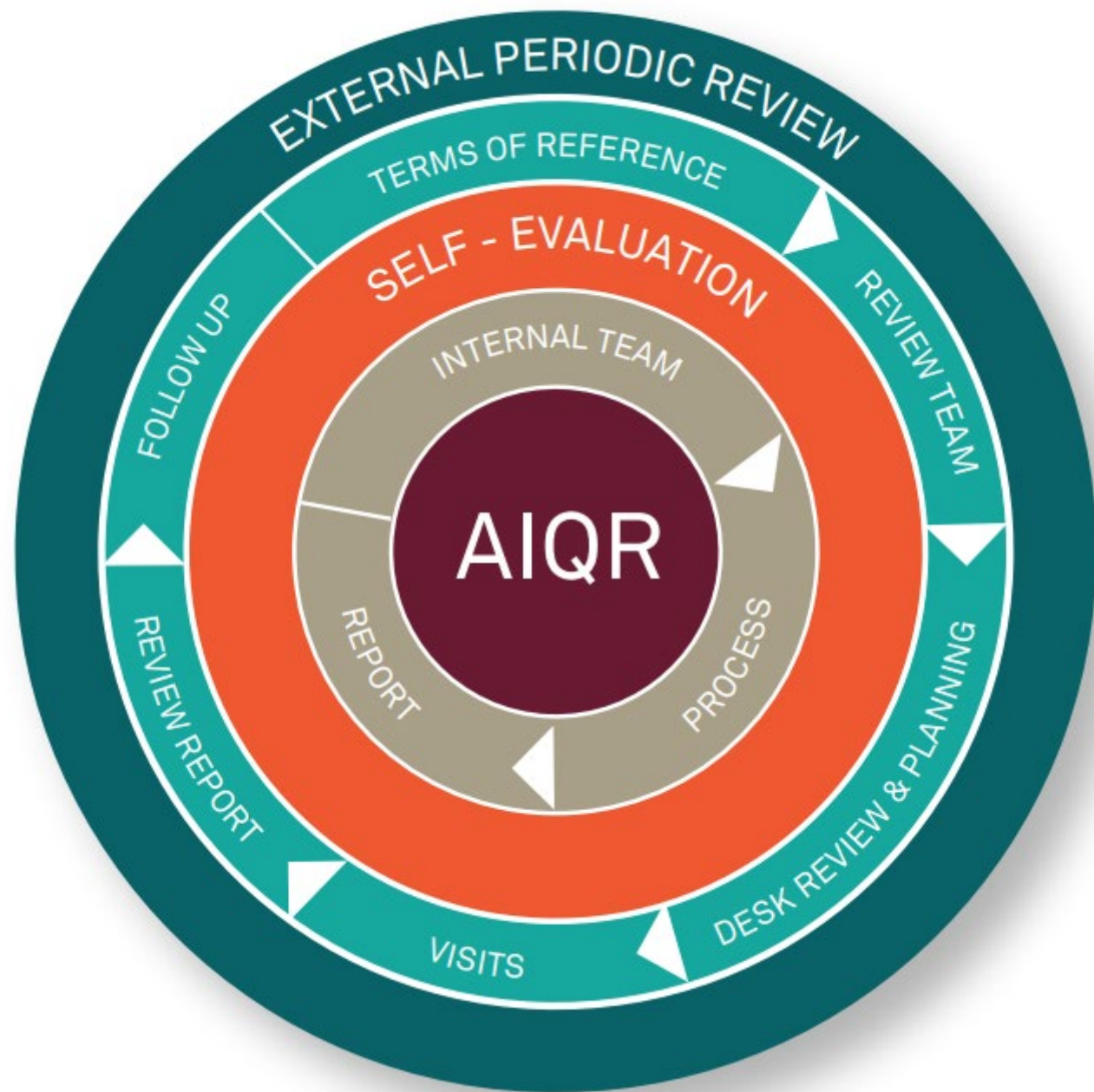
Principles of Quality Assurance

- Goal: **Continuous improvement, enhanced transparency**
- Primary responsibility lies with providers
- QA requires planning, resources and commitment - a process not an event!
- Quality systems are context dependent
- Ownership and understanding of a provider's quality system by its management and staff are crucial
- Student engagement is not optional

Quality Assurance Framework

- QQI Issues QA Guidelines
- Providers establish internal QA procedures having regard to guidelines
- *QQI approves providers' QA procedures (except older universities)*
- *QQI validates private providers' programmes*
- QQI monitors providers' QA implementation through
 - Annual Quality Reports
 - Regular quality dialogue visits from QQI executive
- Cyclical institutional review





Institutional review cycles

Universities Act (1997) - IUQB

- ▶ *Internal QA established*
- ▶ External institutional review cycles for universities in 2005 (EUA-IEP) and 2009-2012 (IRIU)

Qualifications Act (1999) - HETAC

- ▶ *Internal QA established (technological and private HE sectors)*
- ▶ *Programme validation 1971-2003*
- ▶ Delegation of authority 2003-2006
- ▶ External institutional review 2008-2011

Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012) - QQI

- ▶ **Cinnte** institutional review cycle for public HEIs commenced in 2017, concluding in 2024, extended to private HEIs from 2024
- ▶ Re-engagement and approval of QA for private HEIs 2018-22



QQI REVIEW

CINNTE 

A photograph of four business professionals (three men and one woman) sitting around a table in a meeting, viewed from above. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark red filter. The text 'CYCLICAL REVIEW HANDBOOK' is printed in white, bold, uppercase letters in the bottom right corner of this section.

**CYCLICAL REVIEW
HANDBOOK**

Cinnte review objectives

- To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution
- To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.
- To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression

Cinnte review stages

- QQI briefs HEI and confirms terms of reference and timeline
- QQI appoints review team
- HEI prepares Institutional Self Evaluation Report
- QQI briefs panel, with input for HEA
- Chair and coordinating reviewer make planning visit to HEI on behalf of team
- Review team conducts main review visit
- Team drafts report
- Institution comments on factual accuracy of draft report
- Institution submits a response to report findings
- QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee approves the report
- QQI and HEI publish the report and institutional response
- Institution submits follow-up report

Review Team: Role



QFI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Contextualise



gain a sound understanding of the institution, its mission, size, strategies and procedures, whilst taking account of the wider social, cultural, economic and political environment in Ireland;

Critique



be a critical friend to the institution by commenting on and questioning the effectiveness and suitability of the institution's QA and enhancement methods to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose. Identifying positives and negatives and identifying any blockages to effective practices;

Contribute



to the on-going enhancement and development of the institution's effectiveness by providing examples of alternative practices as a catalyst for change, referencing national, European and international exemplars, where known; and

Confirm



provide independent validation to internal and external audiences of the effectiveness of the measures used within the institution and its compliance with statutory requirements and consistency with European standards.

Quality in Irish Higher Education 2023

- A thematic analysis of the annual quality reports submitted by HEIs
- Conducted by independent contractors
- Disseminated in conference that also features case studies on good practice in QA from HEIs
- Good practices case studies published in thematically organised database

Quality in Irish Higher Education 2023

- a marked shift in emphasis away from the impact of the COVID-19 experience
- changes in institutional designation, status and levels of autonomy across the sector are impacting on QA, notably in the technological HE sector
- a continued international focus is evident (including evidence of collaborative provision with European and international partners, articulation arrangements for student mobility, membership of European consortia and participation in international projects and activities);
- notable theme emerging across the AQRs was the leadership, ambition and commitment expressed in relation to the areas of equality, diversity & inclusion and the advancement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

National Networks and Projects

- Irish Quality and Qualifications Forum
- National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN)
- Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSB) Forum
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Practitioners Network
- *National Framework for Doctoral Education Advisory Forum*
- *National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)*
- *National Skills Council*
- *Irish Survey of Student Engagement*
- *National Employers Survey*
- *National Apprenticeship Alliance*
-

European Networks and Roles

- ENQA !
- BFUG Thematic Peer Groups B (Recognition) and C (Quality Assurance)
- QF-EHEA National Correspondent
- National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)
- EQF National Coordination Point
- Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Representative
- National Europass Centre
- EQAVET National Coordination Point

Where next for a mature system?

- ENQA targeted review – site visit February 2024
 - Focus area: thematic analysis
- Revised monitoring and information frameworks
- Designing a new cyclical review model
- International education mark for HE and English language
- Stronger regulatory model for private providers with more learner protection
- Further integration across tertiary provision – progression from FET to HE
- Expanding scope for the NFQ – listed awarding bodies
- System resilience – COVID, academic integrity