



etb

Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Thiobraid Arann
*Tipperary Education and
Training Board*

TIPPERARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD'S PROGRESS REPORT TO QQI ON 2018 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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Introduction

In January 2018, Tipperary ETB (TETB) published a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the period February to December 2018. This improvement plan was the outcome of a self-evaluative process and report that TETB conducted on its quality assurance structures, processes, policies and procedures.

The four key quality assurance areas that TETB identified for improvement were as follows:

1. Governance, Planning and Management of Quality
2. Delivery of Further Education and Training
3. The Learner Experience
4. Information and Data Management

The specific actions and benchmarks that were identified under each of these four areas can be seen in the table on page 9. The development of integrated FET QA procedures and processes was an important outcome of the quality improvement process. The majority of the key tasks/activities for 2018 were achieved. This is encouraging and was due to the willingness of staff to work in collaboration towards a worthwhile and shared goal – the pursuit of quality processes and procedures across TETB.

This report will summarise the quality assurance achievements for 2018 under each of the four areas noted above. The report will then describe the main challenges encountered during the implementation of those improvements and how these challenges have helped to inform the planning of the next quality improvement plan. It will also note the broad core areas of quality assurance that the 2019 improvement plan addresses. To conclude, the report presents the 2018 quality improvement objectives/desired outcomes and associated key tasks/activities in tabular format along with the status update noted against each task.

Summary of Quality Assurance Improvement Achievements for 2018

Governance, Planning and Management of Quality

Aligning quality assurance to TETB's mission and strategy and the publication of same was one of the objectives noted in TETB's 2018 QIP. The commitment to quality assurance can be seen from goal 1 in TETB's [Statement of Strategy 2018–2020](#) - "*to lead the development of quality provision to meet the education and training needs of learners and the wider community engaging with Tipperary ETB*".

On an operational basis, TETB's QA new **governance structures** commenced in mid-2018 and later followed with the publication of *TETB's Quality Assurance Governance Structures, with Terms of Reference* which are available on the [website](#).

TETB's QA governance system is tasked with overseeing all aspects of TETB's quality assurance provision, to include QQI and non-QQI awards. Central to its operation is the separation of functions of governance and oversight from implementation. The FET Senior Management Team, who also have responsibility for QA Governance, is responsible for the strategic oversight, planning and co-ordination of FET provision. This team informs the FET Committee, which is a sub-committee of TETB, of developments in these areas.

The QA Steering Group is responsible for the monitoring and review of quality assurance. In addition, a number of different QA Task Groups, with representation across FET, have been established to support the QA Steering Group in progressing various areas of quality assurance. So far, task group work has concentrated on assessment procedures.

Members of these groups are appropriately competent to carry out the roles and decision-making duties expected of them. Details on membership are also documented in *TETB's Quality Assurance Governance Structures, with Terms of Reference*.

Delivery of Further Education and Training

In the area of assessment, procedures and related documentation for further education and training

programmes were reviewed and revised and an updated process for all of FET provision (leading to QQI awards) is now operational in the areas of **results approval** and **learner appeals**. The **external authentication** processes were reviewed and the sampling process and EA contract and guidelines were updated. Procedures can be found here: [External Authentication](#), [Results Approval](#), and [Learner Appeals](#).

With regard to **improving the application process for staff to avail of Leargas-funded opportunities**, a TETB Erasmus+ KA104 Information Pack for Adult Education Staff Mobility was developed and was piloted for June 2018 to a group of Adult Education staff participating in staff development abroad. The information pack clarifies the process and procedures for staff members wishing to apply and participate in Erasmus. This information pack can be obtained from TETB line managers.

To help **advance the actions of the SOLAS FET CPD strategy**, one of TETB's Adult Education Officers (AEO) is a member of the ETBI Professional Development Forum. TETB completed a professional development survey which contributed to the development of TETB's Professional Development Plan.

The **Continuing Professional Development** (CPD) funding policy was ratified by the TETB Board in 2018. The CPD policy has now been circulated by Director of FET at SMT and FET meetings. The updated CPD Policy is now under its first revision and will be uploaded on the website upon completion.

To advance the actions of SOLAS's **Technology Enhanced Learning** (TEL) plan, TETB piloted a cloud-based system, 'Intune for Education' in a variety of FET settings and commenced its roll-out. This simplified the set up and management of devices and assists with compliance to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As TETB provides further education and training in 10 towns across the county with several locations in each town, this cloud-based platform assists in troubleshooting and is a saving in cost and time, particularly in relation to travel.

The Learner Experience

Good progress has been made in updating further **assessment procedures** to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of learners. As a starting point, ETBI's National Assessment Reference

documents were used to inform the QA Steering Group (QASG) in the development of TETB's procedures. Since Sept 2018, the QASG has worked with specific QA Task Groups and has consulted with experienced and impacted FET practitioners, in order to agree a single set of procedures. Procedures in draft now include Reasonable Accommodation, Secure Storage of Assessment Materials, Records and Learner Assessment Evidence; and Examinations: Planning, Conducting and Concluding.

A **TETB Learner Handbook** for FET is also underway and the QA Task Group are continuing to progress this resource.

TETB's **TEL Action Plan** was submitted to SOLAS in March 2018. This action plan was structured under the four headings as set out in the national TEL strategy: ICT infrastructure, ongoing professional development, learning content programme design and organisation structures. In order to facilitate the production of this action plan, TETB carried out a baseline exercise where centres completed a self-assessment survey. The findings of this survey provided the basis for an action plan that will provide a strong basis for ongoing and enhanced investment in technology-enhanced learning.

The **TETB Communications Group** was established in April 2018. A key action of the group was to develop a TETB standard look to course promotion /advertising. Standardisation helped to increase the professional standing of FET, as well as guarantee correct usage of national and European logos. In September and July 2018, the Communications Group rolled out training sessions to relevant FET staff on how to use the online application 'CANVA'. In addition, a TETB FET-specific Instagram page was set up. Promotional material designed with templates in CANVA can now be posted on TETB FET Instagram page, with an automatic feed to the Facebook page and website.

The **Integrating Literacy Policy** for FET was finalised in December 2018 and has been circulated to all centres/programmes.

Information and Data Management

In 2018, TETB developed a range of **data protection and associated policies** to ensure compliance with GDPR. Work in this area is ongoing. These policies and guidance documents can be viewed on the [data protection section](#) of TETB's website.

All TETB centres and programmes use the **Programme Learner Support System (PLSS)** for the collection and processing of personal data of users of FET programmes funded through SOLAS, and the outputs, outcomes and performance of such programmes. All new features deployed by SOLAS are availed of.

The **website and Sharepoint** continue to be the platforms for housing updated programmes and modules, along with QA procedures and associated templates, resources and results approval panel reports.

Challenges Encountered in Implementation of Improvements

Reflecting on challenges encountered was critical in highlighting the successes of 2018 but was also crucial in identifying the obstacles that affected progression.

The primary challenges experienced in the implementation of the quality improvement plan are outlined below:

1. **Complexities of the Consultation Process:** The consultation process was more time-consuming than expected and elicited many varied perspectives from further education and training practitioners.
2. **Lack of Terms of Reference for QA Task Groups:** The process for review, feedback, consultation and evaluation of draft work and the communications between the QASG and Task Groups needed further definition. The need for clear and specific terms of reference and/or specific guidelines to direct the QA Task Groups in producing draft material became evident as work progressed. This is an action that will be addressed in the 2019 QIP.
3. **Use of QA terms and language:** the interchangeable use of QA terms and QA language by FET practitioners meant that words were being used and understood differently. Establishing an

agreed understanding (and therefore definitions) of commonly-referenced terms across the QA procedures is still ongoing and forms the basis of one improvement action for 2019.

4. **Over Ambitious Action:** The only action not commenced was action 2.1, which was to *“Initiate a process by which TETB can research and review the different practices was intended to produce a plan for a methodology for the collection of data”*. On reflection, it was agreed that this action was too ambitious for TETB, primarily because the nature of this task was research-based and long-term and required additional expertise and time that was beyond what TETB was be able to commit to.
5. **Resources:** the depth and breadth of improving QA across FET requires more resources, especially as TETB is operating an integrated FET QA Unit.

Key Areas of Focus for TETB’s 2019 Quality Improvement Plan

Following the review and evaluation of the 2018 quality improvement process, TETB have identified some quality improvements for 2019 in the following areas:

1. Governance and Management of Quality
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
3. Programmes of Education and Training
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Delivery
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Supports for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public Information and Communications
10. Other Parties involved in Education and Training
11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Specifics of the agreed key tasks/activities and benchmarks within each of these areas are outlined in further detail in *TETB’s 2019 Quality Improvement Plan*.

TETB's 2018 Quality Improvement Plan with Status Updates

The table overleaf outlines the details of the key tasks and activities that were identified for improvement in the 2018 QIP. The last 3 columns of the table provide a progress update on the improvements to date and the revised timescales of each task, where appropriate.

TABLE 1: UPDATE OF PROGRESS ON TETB'S 2018 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP)

Quality Improvement Objective/Desired Outcome	Key Tasks/Activities	Responsible Person(s)	Timeline	Measure/Benchmark [how will you know it was achieved]	Status	Update	Revised Timescale
Governance, Planning and management of Quality	1.1 In collaboration with ETBI QA personnel TETB will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and redefine multi-layered structures of QA governance including a high-level governance body with QA oversight with guidance from the new ETBI QA Governance Reference Framework Establish Terms of Reference for above 	CE, Director of FET, QA Officer and relevant senior staff	Dec 2018	New QA governance structures and Terms of reference are established	Completed		N/A
	1.2 Explore the possibility of applying the proposed governance structure to certification from other awarding bodies other than QQI	FET SMT and QA Officer	Dec 2018	Exploration completed with other awarding bodies	On Track		N/A
	1.3 Commence implementation of new QA governance structures	CE, Director of FET, QA Officer and relevant senior staff	Dec 2018	Structures operating to new terms of reference	Completed		N/A
	1.4 Highlight the link between QA and the TETB Statement of Strategy	Director of FET	June 2018	QA is a priority in TETB Statement of Strategy and Strategy is published on the TETB	Completed		N/A

Delivery of FET	2.1 Initiate a process by which TETB can research and review the different practices e.g how information is communicated to learners, initial assessment, in operation in centres/programmes delivering FET provision	FET SMT, QA WG	Dec 2018	Task group(s) established with defined terms of reference	Not started	Over ambitious target (See Challenges, point 4 for detail)	
	2.2 Review the Results Approval Process for training	QA Unit	Aug 2018	A single RAP process for FET	Completed		N/A
	2.3 Review the FET sampling procedures around EA processes	QA Unit	Aug 2018	A single FET sampling procedure	Completed		N/A
	2.4 Revisit the EA Contract and Guidelines	QA Unit	Aug 2018	Updated EA Contract and Guidelines	Completed		N/A N/A
	2.5 Review the procedures for learner appeals	QA Unit	June 2018	A FET learner appeals process	Completed		N/A
	2.6 Advance the actions of the SOLAS FET CPD Strategy by participation in ETBI/SOLAS working groups	FET SMT	2018 – on-going	Designated personnel participating on WG	Completed		N/A
	2.7 Advance the actions of the TEL action plan that relate to FET delivery	FET SMT	2018 – on-going	A streamlined admin portal	On Track		N/A
	2.8 Improve central application process regarding staff up-skilling on Leargas - funded professional development opportunities	AEO	2018	New central application process	Completed		N/A

	2.9 Increase awareness of TETB's CPD funding policy	Directors and HR Manager	June 2018	CPD Funding policy published on TETB website	Delayed	TETB CPD Funding Guidelines are being revised before publication on website	
The Learner Experience	3.1 Commence the development of a Learner Information Pack (template) that can be modified to suit centres/programmes	QA Office	Oct 2018	Learner Information Pack (Template)	On Track		N/A
	3.2 Consider national assessment handbooks endorsed by ETBI	QA Office	2018 - on-going	TETB assessment handbooks	On Track		N/A
	3.3 Finalise an Integrating Literacy Policy to support the development of a whole ETB	AEO, ALOs,	Dec 2018	Integrating Literacy Policy	Completed		N/A
	3.4 Produce a TEL Action Plan based on the baseline assessment and submit it to SOLAS	FET SMT	April 2018	TEL action plan	Completed		N/A
	3.5 Establish a TETB communications group that will explore processes for advertising and promotion of courses and internal communications	TETB SMT	April 2018	Communications group in place	Completed		N/A
Information and Data Management	4.1 Explore ways to improve analysis of data available on PLSS, QQI and SMLRU	FET SMT	2018 - on-going	Informed planning	On Track		N/A
	4.2 Participate in the roll-out of the updated QBS	Centre/programme managers	May 2018	Updated system in use	Completed		N/A
	4.3 Review data protection policies and procedures in advance of the enforcement of the General Data Protection Regulations	Corporate Services	Dec 2018	Updated policies and Procedures	Completed		N/A

	4.4 Continue to implement the developments of PLSS and reduce the entering of data on multiple systems	Centre/programme managers	2018 - on-going	Updated system in use	On Track		N/A
	4.5 Upload validated programmes and RAP reports to Sharepoint as they evolve	QA Office	2018 - on-going	All TETB validated programmes and most recent RAP reports on Sharepoint	Completed		N/A
	4.6 Upload TETB QA policies and procedures on TETB website as they evolve	QA Office	2018 - on-going	All current TETB QA policies and procedures on TETB website	Completed		N/A