



# **Quality Policy for Further Education and Training**

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## Tipperary ETB Quality Policy for Further Education and Training

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## Definitions

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<b>Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI):</b>	an agency for quality and qualifications in further and higher education in Ireland. Tipperary Education and Training Board's (ETB) quality assurance is accountable to, and monitored by QQI. QQI are the validating agency for QQI programmes.
<b>Quality assurance (QA):</b>	(in education) is the term used to describe the processes to ensure that the learning environment reaches an acceptable level of quality. It is an ongoing process of evaluating the quality of an education system, institution or programme. This involves assessing, monitoring, maintaining and improving quality.
<b>Quality assurance framework:</b>	is the blueprint for the overall configuration of the ETB's further education and training (FET) quality assurance that includes the vision, goals, values, principles, approach to quality assurance and the quality assurance systems.  It is a collection of methods, tools and good practices – grounded in the core values and principles.
<b>Quality assurance system:</b>	refers to Tipperary ETB's internal quality assurance policies, procedures and practices working in unison to form an integrated whole.
<b>A policy:</b>	is a high-level set of intentions, values or principles.
<b>A procedure:</b>	describes the specific steps or actions needed to implement a policy.  Policies address 'what' we do and 'why', whereas procedures address 'how' 'who' and 'when' we do it.

## Acronyms

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DSU	Development and Support Unit	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
ETB	Education and Training Board	SMT	Senior Management Team
EQAVET	The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training	QA	Quality Assurance
FAS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair	QQI	Quality and Qualification Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training	VEC	Vocational Educational Committee
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications		

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## 1. Introduction

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The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 embedded quality assurance in Further Education and Training (FET) by obliging all providers to establish, review and update their procedures for quality assurance. In response to this, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) published guidelines including the [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (2016) and the [Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (2017) to support providers in achieving this.

Since the amalgamation of North and South Vocational Educational Committees (VEC) and Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) in 2013, Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB) has inherited four separate quality assurance agreements. These now must be updated and merged and become part of a new and modernised quality assurance framework that embeds a culture of quality and is underpinned by robust governance. The nature of this development work is ongoing and is closely informed by QQI's guidelines above. As policies and procedures are approved, they will be available in the QA Handbook ([Appendix C](#)).

Tipperary ETB recognises that a modernised quality assurance system cannot be achieved without the input and buy-in of all staff who are key players in delivering quality assurance. The ongoing contributions and efforts of staff is therefore recognised and valued as instrumental to this work.

Tipperary ETB's quality assurance also values the important role learners play as stakeholders, and therefore, provides mechanisms for learners to contribute their views and experiences.

### 1.1 Purpose

- The purpose of this policy is to document Tipperary ETB's approach to quality assurance in FET and to describe its quality assurance framework that supports and promotes a culture of quality and excellence in teaching, learning and related services.
- This overarching and cornerstone policy is intended to inform the development, review and implementation of all quality assurance policies and procedures.

### 1.2 Scope

This Quality Policy applies to all FET programmes and services delivered by Tipperary ETB and its partners<sup>1</sup> and embraces all personnel involved in provision.

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<sup>1</sup> Any legal entity with whom Tipperary ETB chooses to work to jointly provide a programme of education or training.

### 1.3 Responsibilities for Implementation

Responsibilities for this Quality Policy are as follows:

- **All Tipperary ETB staff** will be responsible for implementation and ensuring that quality is embedded in all aspects of their work. All staff are key players in the communication and promotion of quality improvement.
- **Centre Managers and Programme Coordinators** oversee local implementation, monitoring and evaluation and provide feedback to the appropriate team or department eg ETB's FET Senior Management Team (SMT), Development and Support Unit (DSU).
- The **FET QA Office** provides an ETB-wide quality assurance support service to FET. The FET QA Office will also have a role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this Quality Policy and ensuring its compliance with relevant regulations and standards.
- The **FET SMT** will be responsible for governance, management and oversight of quality assurance operations, as delegated by the ETB's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- The **ETB's SLT** has executive responsibility for ensuring that the Quality Policy contributes to the strategic direction of the ETB, fulfils statutory obligations, and resource and manage effective implementation.

### 1.4 Other Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

- All Tipperary ETB quality assurance policies and procedures in FET.

## 2. Tipperary ETB FET Context

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The remit of Tipperary ETB, as the statutory provider of education for county Tipperary, is to provide a comprehensive range of quality education and training programmes to meet the needs of the community it serves, with three pillars: Primary, Post-primary and FET. The Tipperary FET College provides a wide range of programmes and services, with courses running on a full or part-time basis, non-accredited or accredited (National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels 1-6) with awards from awarding bodies that are nationally and internationally recognised. The core campuses of the Tipperary FET College are strategically placed around the county, supporting multiple satellite FET centres.

### 3. Aims of Quality Assurance in FET

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The overarching goal of Tipperary ETB's quality assurance in FET is ensuring that learners obtain high-quality education and training.

**Pursuing excellence through standards, innovation and quality learning experiences for all learners**

The following five objectives are planned to accomplish this goal:

- **Improving the quality of education and training**  
Quality assurance intends to identify best practice and areas for improvement and implement measures to enhance the quality of FET.
- **Improving the quality of learners' experiences**  
Quality assurance intends to identify best practice and areas for improvement and implement measures to enhance the quality of learners' experiences.
- **Recognising and improving Tipperary ETB's identity and brand**  
Quality assurance sets out to build and maintain a powerful and sustainable identity in the community.
- **Building stakeholder confidence**  
Quality assurance aims to build stakeholder confidence by demonstrating that the FET programmes and experiences delivered are of a high standard.
- **Promoting accountability**  
Quality assurance seeks to foster accountability by ensuring that Tipperary ETB adheres to explicit and transparent quality assurance and reporting processes aligned with statutory guidelines.



## 4. Our Approach to Quality Assurance in FET

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### 4.1 Introduction

A strong commitment to quality is instrumental for effective quality practices. This commitment lays the foundation for a culture where rigorous quality standards are consistently upheld, driving continuous improvement across all facets of operations.

Tipperary's FET Quality Assurance incorporates:

- QQI's [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (2016),
- Our quality principles,
- The quality cycle.

### QQI's Core Guidelines

These core guidelines identify 11 core areas crucial to quality that must be addressed by providers to assure an acceptable threshold of quality assurance and to enhance education and training provision and its related services. See [Appendix A](#) for more detail on each of these core areas of quality assurance.

#### QQI's 11 core areas of Quality Assurance:

1. Governance and management
2. Documented approach
3. Programmes of education and training
4. Staff recruitment, management and development
5. Teaching and learning
6. Assessment of learners
7. Supports for learners
8. Information and data management
9. Public Information and communication
10. Other parties involved in education and training
11. Self-evaluation, monitoring and review

Figure 1: QQI's 11 Core Areas of Quality Assurance

### Quality Assurance Principles

Our eight quality assurance principles are the key 'beliefs' that serve as the foundation of quality in education and training in Tipperary ETB FET (figure 2). See further detail of each principle in [Appendix B](#).



Figure 2: Tipperary ETB's Quality Assurance Principles

### The Quality Assurance Cycle

The Quality Assurance Cycle is an endorsed tool used by The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) to enhance the quality of vocational education and training systems in Europe. It consists of four interconnected stages: planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

Tipperary ETB's approach uses this tool to systematically plan, implement, evaluate and review quality provision, policies and procedures (see figure 3).

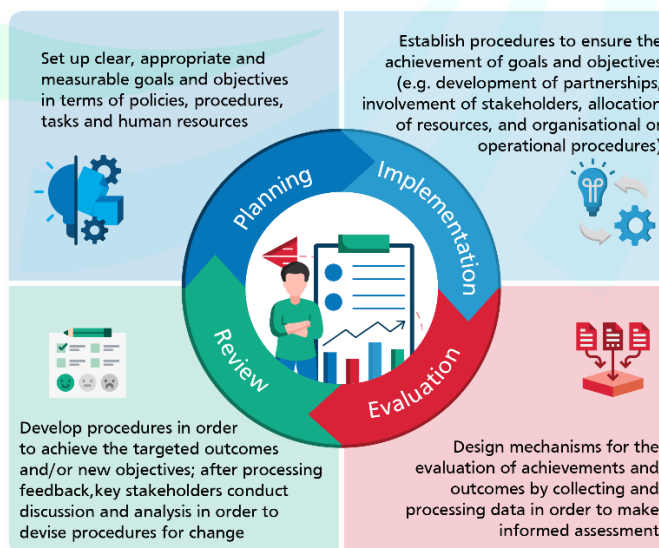


Figure 3: The Quality Assurance Cycle (Source: EQAVET Quality Assurance Cycle)

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1546&langId=en>

## 4.2 Tipperary ETB's Quality Assurance Framework

Quality assurance in Tipperary ETB is organised, supported and managed through a quality assurance framework (figure 4). The framework is the blueprint for the overall configuration of the FET quality assurance. QQI's 11 core areas are acknowledged, integrated and achieved through this framework.

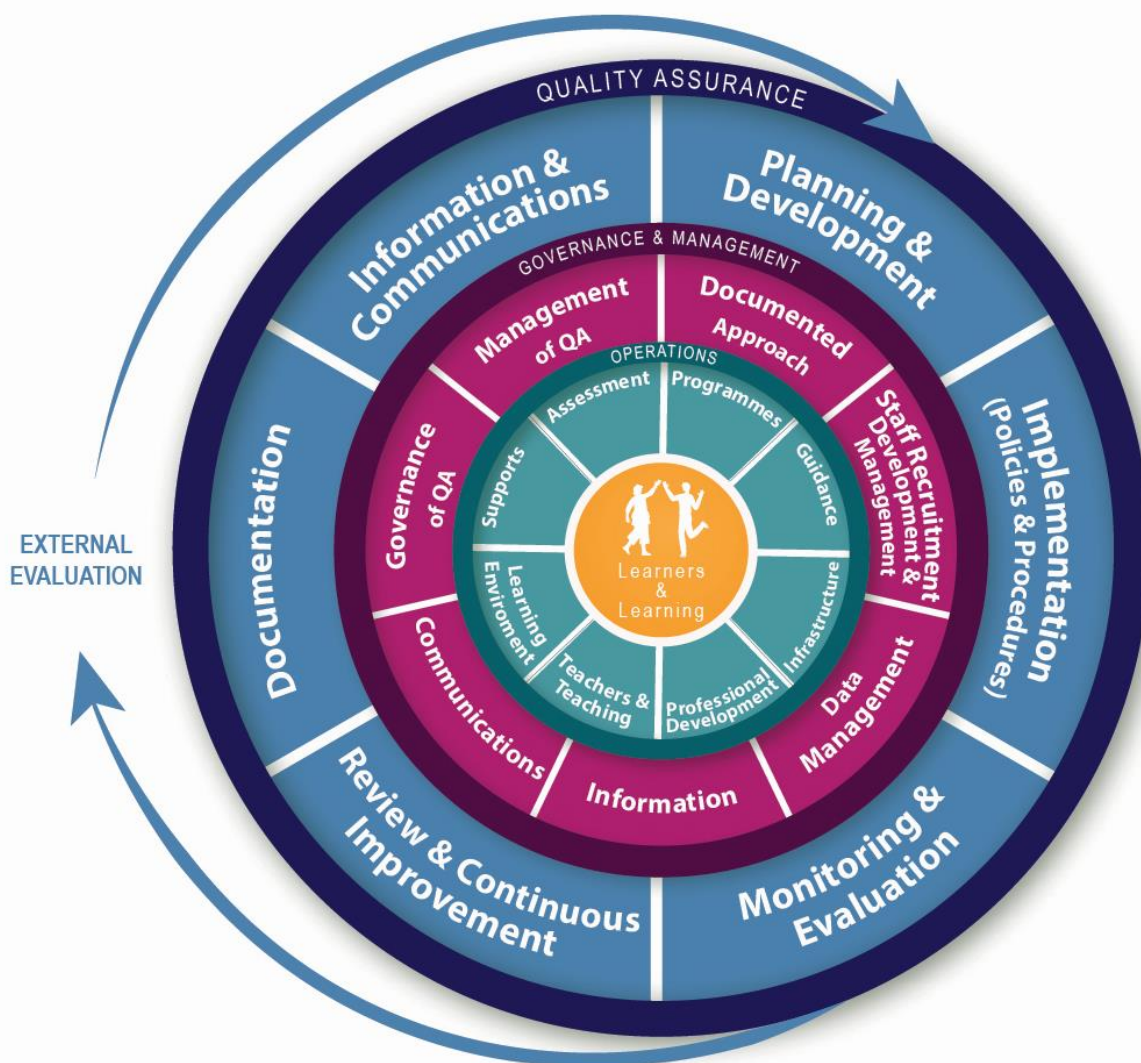


Figure 4: Tipperary ETB's Quality Assurance Framework

Tipperary ETB's commitment to high quality provision places learners at the heart of all activities. A learner-centred approach operates through a three-layered framework:

- Operations: teaching, learning and all related activities
- Governance and management processes
- Quality assurance

#### 4.2.1 Operations: Teaching, Learning and Related Activities

Operations include the arrangements that work to deliver, support and improve teaching, learning and related services. Operations play a pivotal role in ensuring smooth functioning and effective delivery to meet the needs of all learners.

Quality assurance arrangements around teaching and learning include the following:

- Staff management and development,
- Programmes delivery, feedback and review,
- Teaching and learning,
- The learning environment,
- Assessment of learners,
- Supports for learners,
- Arrangements with other parties.

#### 4.2.2 Governance and Management

This includes the governance and management structures and arrangements that back operational functions. Comprehensive and strategic quality planning and fit-for purpose decision-making structures mitigate risk and oversee quality, thereby upholding the integrity of academic processes and standards.

It includes the following:

- Structures and procedures for the governance and management of quality assurance, strategic planning, development and management.
- Oversight and management of quality assurance for:
  - Staff recruitment, management and development,
  - Programme management,
  - Assessment processes and accreditation,
  - Data and information,
  - Public information and communications.

#### 4.2.3 Quality Assurance

The framework enables effective management of our quality assurance.

It includes:

- Strategic planning and development,
- Documentation,
- Implementation of policies and procedures,
- Monitoring and evaluation,

- Review and continuous improvement.

It requires effective communication and information systems (figure 5).

### 4.3 Quality Assurance

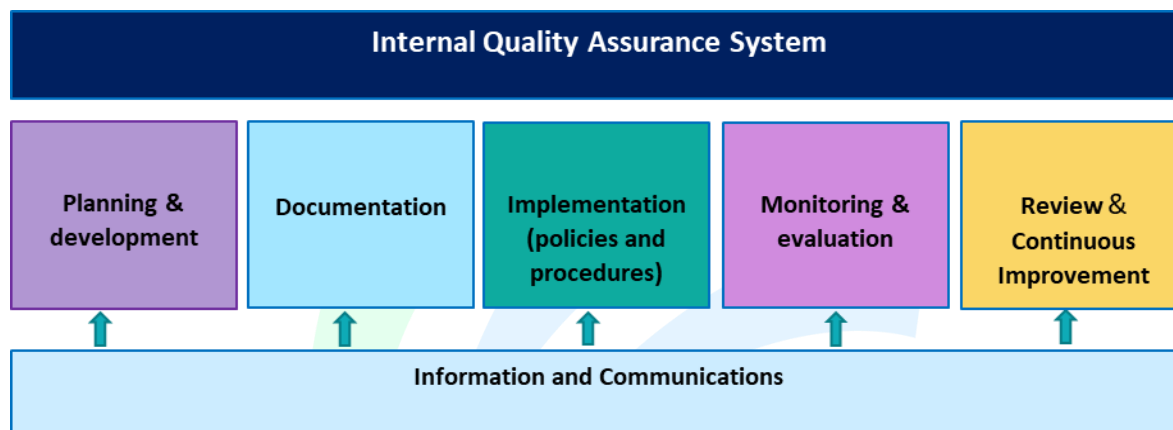


Figure 5: Tipperary ETB's Internal Quality Assurance System

#### 4.3.1 Planning and Development

Quality strategic planning is a core process and is an essential means of identifying:

- what needs to be achieved,
- how can it be achieved and by whom and when, and
- what resources are needed.

Quality assurance includes clear goals, objectives, actions and/or indicators and is planned and developed to take account of the following:

- Tipperary ETB's vision, mission and core values,
- National and local strategies and agreements,
- Quality assurance standard practices and expectations, both nationally and internationally,
- Obligations set out by QQI as the national quality assurer, in particular the [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (2016), the [Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (2017) and Topic Specific Guidelines,
- Quality standards and expectations of awarding bodies,
- Regulatory and professional requirements,
- Needs and expectations of prospective and enrolled learners and internal and external stakeholders,
- Reflections of experience and learnings gained in delivering its programmes and services,

- Our Principles of Quality Assurance,
- The [Quality Assurance Policy and Procedure Development](#) process.

#### 4.3.2 Documentation

The documentation process involves the systematic recording of activities, processes, and procedures using standard templates. It provides a method to present the policies and procedures in a consistent manner.

Policies and procedures will clearly identify roles and responsibilities for oversight and implementation. They aim to be accessible and transparent.

A system of documentation management ensures that latest versions are available and summary of changes are recorded.

#### 4.3.3 Implementation

Implementation is the application of policies and procedures. All staff contribute to quality assurance implementation, backed by senior management and the relevant offices and departments eg DSU, FET QA Office, Human Resources Department and Information and Communications Technology Department.

Actively embracing policies and procedures cultivates a quality-driven culture by advocating best practices, enhancement and continuous improvement.

#### 4.3.4 Self-evaluation, Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

Methodical and evidence-driven monitoring, self-evaluation and review processes examine the effectiveness of quality assurance, FET programmes and related services. These processes ascertain ongoing relevance and suitability.

##### – Internal Monitoring and Review

Internal monitoring happens continuously, encompasses both formal and informal methods, and targets specifics such as process, policy, procedure, practice, experience.

Monitoring measures performance against pre-determined goals, serving as an early warning system and offering information to prompt further analysis and evaluation.

The review process considers outcomes from monitoring and evaluation, and, agrees the appropriate actions for continuous improvement.

#### – Self-evaluation and review

Self-evaluation is a scheduled, reflective and critical evaluation process. It allows Tipperary ETB to explore and scrutinise the effectiveness of programmes, services and the accompanying quality assurance system.

It adopts a broad systematic focus, is formal in nature and typically draws from routine monitoring, evaluation and review activities, and, incorporates input and feedback from stakeholders.

Self-evaluation focuses on the impact of policies and procedures on stakeholders, facilitating the recognition of effective practices and areas requiring enhancements. It considers the outcomes and notes the appropriate actions to be taken.

The self-evaluation allows continuous improvement and enhancement and feeds into [external quality assurance](#).

#### 4.3.5 Communications and Information

Communication plays an important role in facilitating successful implementation of quality assurance. Effective communications ensures that there is buy-in and a shared understanding of, and motivation for, quality assurance.

Information sharing fosters transparency and promotes accountability among all stakeholders. Tipperary ETB ensures that information to all stakeholders is available, accessible, current, clear, accurate and timely. Policies and procedures are available on the appropriate internal and external platforms, including:

- Tipperary ETB's [Staff hub](#).
- Tipperary [ETB's Website](#).

#### 4.4 External Quality Assurance

QQI are responsible for ensuring providers' quality assurance procedures are effective. An external review process is conducted to assess the effectiveness and implementation of the provider's own internal quality assurance procedures.

Following the external review, QQI provides recommendations which Tipperary ETB uses as part of continuous improvement planning. QQI monitors ongoing progress. Reports from the external review process are published by QQI and Tipperary ETB.

Tipperary ETB considers the external review process as a key driver to critically evaluate and manage change for the development and growth of the organisation.

## 5. Impact of the Quality Assurance Framework

### 5.1 Journey from Aims to Impact

Measuring the impact of quality assurance is important to track progress, confirming if aims are being achieved and having their desired effect.

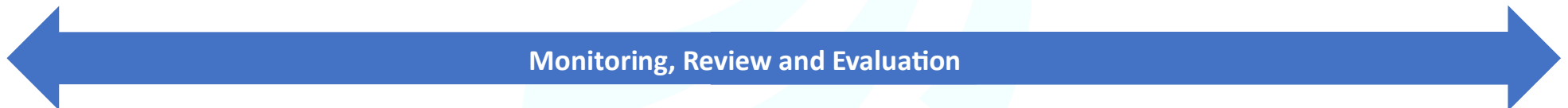
Holistically, figure 6 shows examples of the logical connections between the quality assurance aims and the intended results (outcomes and impact).

Inputs	Quality assurance takes account of factors (inputs) that affect FET. Inputs may be internal or external to Tipperary ETB. Internal inputs may include strategic goals and priorities, budget or resources. External inputs may include changes in legislation or labour market requirements. Some are within the control of Tipperary ETB, others are not.
Aims	The <a href="#">aims of quality assurance</a> are the desired results. The use of the quality assurance framework supports achievement of the aims.
Activities	Activities are the actions undertaken to achieve the aims. Activities are planned and take account of inputs and context.
Outputs	Outputs are the intended and planned results of the activities undertaken.
Outcomes and Impact	Outcomes and impact are the overall results and effects (intended and unintended). Activities and outputs can be controlled, but intended outcomes and their impact can only be influenced.



## Quality Assurance

Inputs	Aims	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p><b>Mission, vision, strategic goals &amp; priorities</b></p> <p><b>Standard practices</b></p> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <p><b>Regulatory &amp; legislative requirements</b></p> <p><b>Labour market requirements</b></p> <p><b>Quality assurance principles</b></p>	<p><b>Excellence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality FET</li> <li>• quality learner experiences</li> </ul> <p><b>Recognition of Tipperary ETB identity and brand</b></p> <p><b>Building stakeholder confidence</b></p> <p><b>Promoting accountability</b></p>	<p><b>Teaching &amp; learning</b></p> <p><b>Programme delivery, feedback &amp; review</b></p> <p><b>Learner supports &amp; guidance</b></p> <p><b>Learning environments</b></p> <p><b>Staff Management &amp; development</b></p> <p><b>Assessment &amp; accreditation</b></p> <p><b>Quality assured practices</b></p> <p><b>Documentation</b></p> <p><b>Information &amp; communication</b></p> <p><b>Governance &amp; management</b></p>	<p><b>Improved teaching methods &amp; learner engagement</b></p> <p><b>Enriched learning environment</b></p> <p><b>Improved inclusive practices</b></p> <p><b>Professional growth opportunities</b></p> <p><b>Meeting regulatory standards &amp; achieving accreditation</b></p> <p><b>Standardised &amp; effective QA practices</b></p> <p><b>Enhanced document management</b></p> <p><b>Data-informed decision-making</b></p> <p><b>Robust decision-making</b></p>	<p><b>High-quality programmes &amp; services</b></p> <p><b>Improved learner access, choice &amp; success</b></p> <p><b>Improved staff motivation, productivity, retention &amp; adaptability</b></p> <p><b>Enhanced organisational expertise</b></p> <p><b>Improved learner experience</b></p> <p><b>Enhanced trust amongst stakeholders</b></p> <p><b>QA compliance &amp; accountability</b></p> <p><b>Embedded QA culture</b></p> <p><b>Organisational agility</b></p>	<p><b>High-quality in FET provision (excellence)</b></p> <p><b>High-quality learner experiences, satisfaction &amp; outcomes</b></p> <p><b>Tipperary ETB brand associated with high-quality</b></p> <p><b>Reputable provider</b></p> <p><b>Public confidence</b></p>



**Figure 6: Results Chain of the Quality Assurance Framework**

## 5.2 Intended Impacts

**Pursuing excellence through standards, innovation and quality learning experiences for all learners**

The desired overarching impact is ‘*excellence*’ through high-quality education and training. Specifically, the five desired impacts are as follows:

- **Quality Education and Training**

Quality FET will provide accessible, relevant and appealing learning pathways and programmes to a diverse range of learners. It will also focus on the professional development of staff to continuously improve their skills to deliver quality FET programmes and supports to learners.

- **Quality Learner Experiences**

Continuous improvement and enhancement of FET will drive learner engagement and success by providing authentic learning experiences that develop knowledge, skills and competencies and that ignites a passion for lifelong learning. A quality experience will also provide opportunities for learners to contribute to and mould future FET.

- **Tipperary ETB Identity and Brand Recognition**

By providing excellence in FET, Tipperary ETB will be increasingly recognised as a high-quality provider in the region, becoming a provider of choice for learners.

- **Stakeholder Confidence**

Providing confidence to internal management and to external stakeholders is expected (eg QQI, funding authorities, employers, other educational institutions, learners, parents). Confidence will also arise informally by word-of-mouth and more formally by the publication of results of quality assurance and quality review activities by our external quality agencies.

- **Accountability**

Effective use of the quality assurance procedures, in particular the governance arrangements, will mean that Tipperary ETB can transparently account for decision-making (ie what, to whom, for what and when) and be able to report functions, processes, standards and performance to stakeholders with confidence.

## 6. Internal Monitoring and Review of this Policy

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The FET QA Office is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy and ensuring its compliance with standards. Monitoring and review is supported by the relevant QA governance groups and informed by stakeholder feedback.

The review schedule is shown on the table on page 2.

## 7. Evidence of Implementation of this Policy

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Evidence to confirm implementation of this policy may include, for example:

- Meetings, notes and minutes
- Quality plans, for example, action plans, improvement plans
- Implementation of quality assurance procedures
- Records of feedback
- Quality reports

## 8. Monitoring of Effectiveness of this Policy

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The following can be considered when evaluating the effective implementation of this policy, for example:

- Analysis of inputs that affect quality assurance
- Assessing progress and achievement of the aims and desired impact of quality assurance
- Evaluating staff and physical resources needed for implementation of procedures in quality assurance
- Evaluating and reviewing feedback from internal staff and stakeholders and management and information systems
- Analysis of quality assurance reports and findings – internal and external
- Assessing and evaluating statutory QA obligations

## **Appendix A: 11 Areas of Quality Assurance as Identified by QQI**

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### **1. Governance and Management**

A provider must provide robust governance and administration in the quality assurance framework to ensure separation of responsibilities between groups involved in initially proposing and developing ideas, materials or decisions and those involved in ultimate decision-making and action-setting.

### **2. Documented Approach**

A provider must develop and monitor a fully documented quality assurance system to ensure that there are robust, documented policies and procedures in place for the assurance of the quality across provision and services.

### **3. Programmes of Education and Training**

A systematic process of programme development, monitoring and review involving competent experts that incorporates consultation with stakeholders, must be in place. Procedures for programme proposal, approval, management and validation must use the providers governance structures, policies and procedures to ensure correct decisions are made regarding programmes.

### **4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development**

A systematic approach to the fair and transparent recruitment and professional development of staff engaged in programme and service delivery should be apparent. The quality assurance system should allow for opportunities for communications, feedback and professional development and management of these.

### **5. Teaching and Learning**

Self-monitoring and improving the quality of the teaching and learning of the provider's education and training programmes must be central to a quality learning experience and promotion of excellence within learning.

### **6. Assessment of Learners**

The assessment framework must set out the approach to assessment to ensure the fair, consistent, transparent and valid assessment of learners. The administration of assessment must also be addressed.

### **7. Supports for Learners**

The provider's quality assurance system should allow for a range of information, services and supports for learners so that programmes and services are accessible to all. Learner supports must be monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are inclusive, relevant and appropriate to learners' needs.

## 8. Information and Data Management

A provider's quality assurance should use and analyse data and information, available from management and information systems to support system-level quality improvement.

## 9. Public Information and Communication

Documents and information should be published in a way that is clear, accurate, objective and accessible so that up-to-date information is always available for stakeholders and in line with statutory regulations.

## 10. Other Parties involved in Education and Training

A provider's quality assurance policies and procedures should extend to all programmes and services and partnerships. The quality assurance system must include clear and documented arrangements for any partnered agreements.

## 11. Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Arrangements to explore, reflect and report on the effectiveness of programmes, services and the supporting quality assurance must be clear and in place. The evaluation and review process should use a range of data and feedback from users and systems to ensure that evaluations conducted are comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based. Self-evaluation feeds into external review.

## Appendix B: Tipperary ETB's Quality Assurance Principles for FET

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### 1. Provider-owned

Tipperary ETB is responsible for quality assurance when developing, delivering, evaluating, maintaining, reviewing and renewing education and training programmes and services. Planning, resources and commitment to quality assurance are required. Quality assurance is the responsibility of all.

### 2. Stakeholder Engagement

Our quality assurance system recognises the importance of the contributions of stakeholder knowledge and perspectives in adopting, implementing and evaluating quality assurance in practice and to local contexts and demands.

### 3. Integrity

We value working-practices that are transparent, professional, ethical and honest. Operating with integrity will maintain and future-proof the ETB's reputation as a trustworthy provider of education.

### 4. Teamwork

Active participation, co-operation, mutual support and shared expertise is valued as a means to promote collaborative practice, a sense of collegiality, innovative thinking and creative problem-solving.

### 5. Encouraging Innovation and Continuous Improvement

We value innovative thinking and continuous improvement. This enables us to embrace opportunities to expand our knowledge base, generate ideas and solutions and adapt to changing circumstances.

### 6. Evidence-based Decision-making

Our quality assurance system values the systematic consideration of quantitative and qualitative evidence during decision-making and encourages stakeholders to use relevant data and information as part of strategic planning at local and provider levels. Utilisation of robust data and information is also fundamental to monitoring and evaluating our programmes and services, reinforcing accountability.

### 7. Externality

Our quality assurance system respects the use of external persons to provide expert and fresh opinions and objective advice, particularly for provider-level decisions. External input and objectivity supports good governance and helps prevent groupthink.

## 8. Inclusion and Diversity

Learners are centre-stage to everything we do. We aim to attend to, and respect, the diverse needs of all learners to ensure optimal potential regardless of background or ability. This supports equality, dignity, inclusion and opportunity.

Staff play an instrumental role in supporting learners to engage and succeed.



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