



Tipperary
ETB

Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary Education & Training Board

Programme Request and Approval Procedure

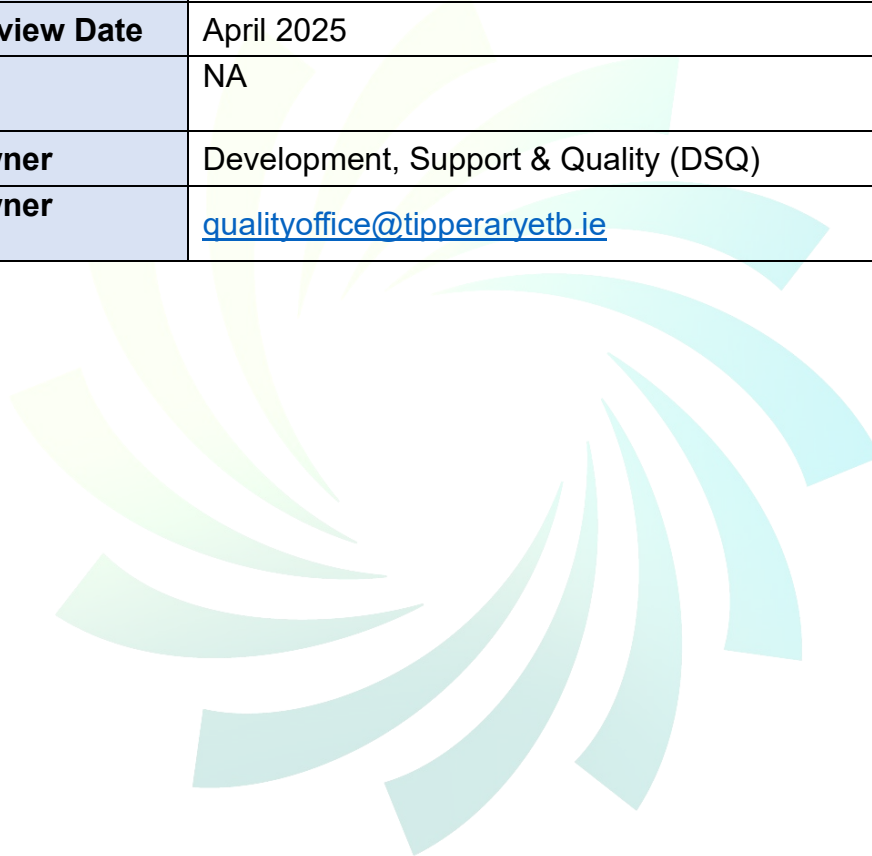
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Programme Request and Approvals Procedure

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Definitions

Common Awards System (CAS)	An evolving system of further education and training awards and award standards at NFQ Levels 1 to 6 based on learning outcomes.
Non-CAS programme	A validated programme based on a relevant NFQ award descriptor leading to a non-CAS award.
Programme Manager	The Programme Manager is the nominated person who is responsible for the quality assurance arrangements of the programme. The use of the title 'Programme Manager', in the context of this document, comes from the requirement of new QQI programmes to assign responsibility to a named person. The Programme Manager, in this context, therefore, does not refer to the centre's or programme's operational coordinator or manager.
Programme Proposer	The person or group who submits a formal request for programme delivery, amendment or development relating to a programme, module, course or award.
Programme Approval Committee (PAC)	The PAC is the formal committee that considers various programme requests from centres and senior management.
Programme	Refers to a process by which a learner acquires knowledge, skill or competence and includes a course of study, a course of instruction and an apprenticeship.
Module	The parts that a programme may be divided into for delivery and assessment purposes.
Major Award	Is the main class of award made at each level of the NFQ.
Minor Award	Is an award type based on the study of single modules which can be completed and certificated individually also commonly referred to as component certificates. All minor awards are linked to a major award, which allows learners the opportunity to build on their minor awards and work towards gaining a major award.
Special Purpose Award	Is an award type developed for specific areas of learning that have a narrow scope. All special purpose awards comprise of one or more components.
Supplementary Awards	Is an award that recognises learning concerned with updating, upskilling or continuing education and training. They are occupation-related awards and they consist of one or more components.
Professional Award	Is a generic award type that recognises achievement of knowledge, skills and competencies associated with a professional area from levels 5 to 9. The award standards can be annotated for specific professions.

Validated programme	Is a programme that has been approved by QQI for a provider to deliver to enrolled learners. Providers must meet QQI criteria that satisfy QQI that a provider's enrolled learners who complete that programme will acquire, and where appropriate, be able to demonstrate, the necessary knowledge, skill or competence to justify an award of QQI being offered in respect of that programme.
Micro-Credential	An award type that recognises small volumes of learning, similar to a minor award, but does not have to be linked to a larger major award.

Acronyms

ABP	Area-based Planning
FET	Further Education and Training
PAC	Programme Approval Committee
SMT	Senior Management Team

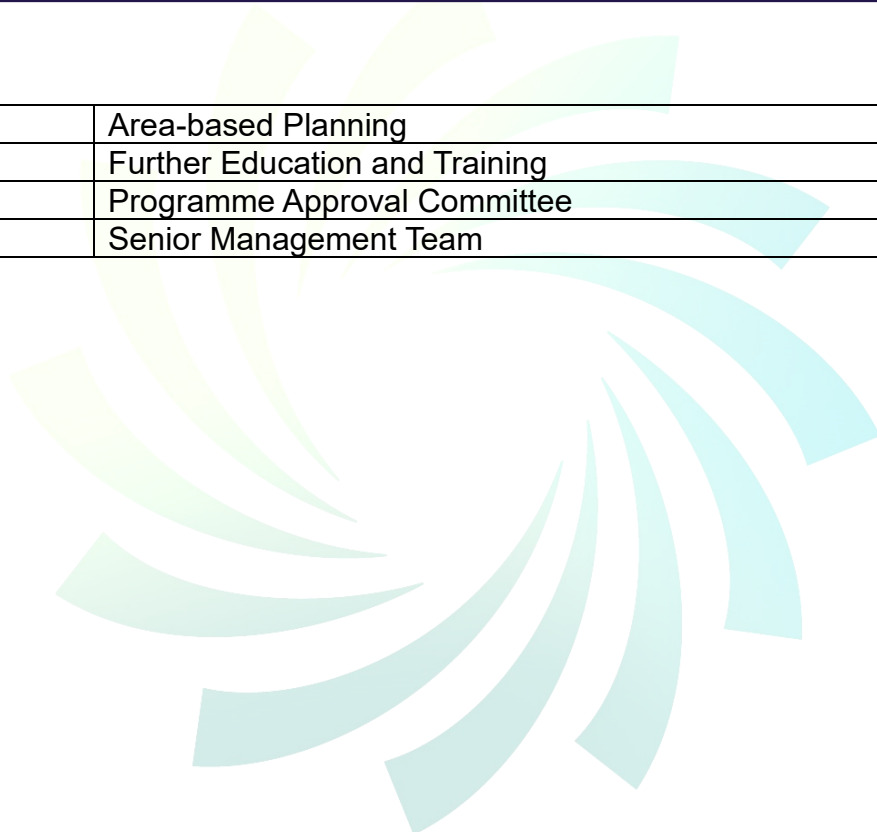


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1. Introduction

The process of requesting permission to deliver programmes, modules and courses is part of Tipperary ETB's formal programme approval process to ensure that good governance practices exist when making decisions regarding programmes and their delivery and development.

In Tipperary ETB, requests must be made to deliver, amend, review or (re)develop all programmes, modules or courses. Requests are:

- made by centres to Tipperary ETB, and
- made by Tipperary ETB to another provider/awarding body.

Only validated programmes or programmes with permission from an awarding body can be delivered and assessed in Tipperary ETB.

This document should be read in conjunction with Tipperary ETB's [Programme Approval and Management Policy](#) and the [Policy and Procedure for Programme Development and Validation](#) and should be cognisant of Area-based Planning processes.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Set out the quality assurance criteria/considerations when preparing and making requests for programmes/modules/course access, review, amendment to, development or re-development
- Describe the role and responsibilities of the Programme Proposer
- Set out procedures for making programme-related requests and communicating outcomes
- Describe programme expectations post- approval.

1.2 Scope

The scope applies to all accredited and non-accredited programmes, modules and courses, and for all awarding bodies.

1.3 Responsibilities for Implementation

Responsibilities for this procedure are as follows:

- The **Programme Proposer** is the authorised person on behalf of the centre or the ETB (eg programme coordinator, centre manager or other) who submits a formal request for permission to deliver, amend or design and (re)develop a programme, module or course. The programme proposer is responsible for researching and submitting a valid request.

- The **FET QA Office** (including the Programme Development team) provides support and guidance services to those making requests.

The FET QA Office has a role in facilitating communications, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this procedure and ensuring its compliance with relevant standards.

- The **FET Senior Manager** is responsible for receiving the centre's request and progressing it through the appropriate governance pathway.
- All **FET centre management** and **coordination staff** are responsible for programme delivery in line with programme requirements, including conditions of approval.

1.4 Other Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

- [Quality Policy](#)
- [Programme Approval and Management Policy](#)
- [Programme Development Policy and Procedure](#)
- Collaborative Provision Policy

2. Process for Making Non-Accredited Programme Requests

Requests to deliver non-accredited programmes/courses are sent directly to a FET Senior Manager. The senior manager considers the appropriateness of the programme request, the learner cohort and the learning environment. Area-based planning processes and required resources, staff, and support services are factors considered by the senior manager alongside the current provision.

The senior manager may 'approve' or 'reject' the request or 'request further information'.

3. Process for Making Accredited Programme Requests

The Programme Proposer should follow the steps below:

3.1 Ensure the idea for a programme/course meets the criteria:

- **Strategic Alignment:** The programme being requested is compatible with the mission, vision, and strategic priorities and goals. This alignment includes factors such as the Strategic Performance Agreement, FET Strategic Performance Agreement, FET strategy (eg active inclusion, evidence of labour market needs, educational pathway, etc).
- **Area-Based Programme Planning (ABP):** The ABP process is considered, and the requested programme is compatible with other programme offerings in the area.

- **Learner-Centric Approach:** The proposed programme meets the needs of the target learner cohort.
- **External Considerations:** The proposed programme takes into account external influences, such as community input and the needs of employers, as well as labour market demands.

3.2 Research and Preparation

The amount of research and preparation will be proportionate to the complexity and nature of the request. For example, more research and preparation will be needed for requesting programmes that are currently not validated or owned by Tipperary ETB, than those that are validated and owned. Likewise, if a programme needs to be developed, this will require extensive research and preparation.

- Consult with the FET QA Office and/or Programme Managers for support, for example on, validation status, award and programme rules, types and extent programme amendments possible and other.
 - **Note:** Depending on the rules of the awarding body, the award or programme requirements and who owns and manages the programme, some changes may be permitted. This information will be required to assist with completing the PR2 Form.
 - **Note:** Newly developed programmes (ie post 2021) are assigned a Programme Manager. The programme manager will have comprehensive knowledge of the programme and its requirements including the quality assurance arrangements. This information will be required to assist with completing the PR3 Form.
 - **Note:** Programme design and development is a substantial undertaking requiring significant input of time, resources and a variety of expertise including programme designers, subject-matter experts and quality assurers. QA requires that programmes are designed with learner and other stakeholder involvement. Internal and external consultation with a variety of stakeholders is required, as is an evaluation of the new programme by suitably qualified experts.

3.2.1 Conduct appropriate research and feasibility

- There should be a **sound rationale and evidence base** for delivering, amending or developing a programme. The rationale could include an educational, social, business or labour market justification for offering or changing the programme, for example, an identified need or skill shortage, fostering the inclusion of marginalised groups of learners, update to meet new professional standards.
- A **broad range of sources** of knowledge and information should be consulted. The extent of the research will vary with the proposal type. Such research could involve some or all of the following:

- Check the current validation status ie is Tipperary ETB already **validated** to use the programme by the awarding body or is validation required following programme development?
- Engage with national, regional and local data/reports that indicate a need for the proposed programme
- Consult and further engage with staff involved in Area-Based Programme/*Course* Planning.
- Consult and engage with other relevant stakeholders and/or industry representatives or professional experts (internal and/or external) who can provide information on educational, business, skills or labour market needs.
- Gather feedback from multiple sources: Such sources should include stakeholders such as learners, community members, staff, and employers.
- A **risk assessment** of any relevant risks should be conducted. Risks such as financial, legal, reputational, or other potential challenges should be included. Due diligence checks should be conducted, and findings presented for approval and consideration.
- Review **requirements of the programme**, award and/or professional regulatory bodies.
 - If the proposal is for a new programme development, research the requirements of similar programmes ie conduct benchmarking
- **Discuss** with the **FET Senior Manager** to corroborate demand, currency, relevancy etc.
- Consider **access, transfer, and progression routes** and opportunities, such as pathways to and from the programme to other courses or employment.
- Review the availability and suitability of **assessment environments** for workplace and practical training.
- Examine the **capacity for programme delivery** in relation to:
 - staffing (allocation of teaching and support staff, qualifications, expertise, professional development)
 - physical resources and learning environment (equipment, location, premises, facilities)
 - any additional allocations or resources not currently in place are identified, cost-estimated and there is a timeframe provided to put in place
 - For each requested centre/location, the appropriateness and capacity to deliver the requested programme is considered alongside the centre's existing suite of programmes.

3.3 Complete the programme request application form

Different types of programme requests can be made using forms: PR1 Form, PR2 Form and PR3 Form ([see Figure 1](#)).

3.3.1 Select the appropriate programme request form. The forms are also available on the [Tipperary ETB QA SharePoint](#).

3.3.2 Fully and accurately complete the programme request form and include all supporting documentation and follow the instructions on each form.

Note: Screening and technical checks are conducted on programme request forms to check for completeness and accuracy.

Note: Incomplete forms will not be entered in the approval process and may be returned. This may result in delays in getting approval.

3.3.3 Sign the programme request form.

Note: by signing the form you are acknowledging the requirements of the programme/award/qualification and agreeing to have these in place within an appropriate timeframe.

Note: Tipperary ETB may follow up to request evidence that all requirements are in place.

3.4 Submit the programme request form

Submit within the relevant timeframes to the FET Senior Manager. They will progress the request through the correct pathway for governance and approval.

3.5 Present the programme proposal to the PAC

Depending on the type of request, the Programme Proposer may be asked to attend the PAC meeting to present and justify the proposal, and, to clarify any queries.

4. Types of Programme Requests

The various types of programme requests can be made using one of three forms ([see Figure 1](#)):

4.1 PR1 Form - Programme Delivery Request Form

4.2 PR2 Form - Programme Amendment Request Form

4.3 PR3 Form - Programme Development Request Form

<h2>PR1 Form</h2>	<h3>Request permission to deliver a programme or module(s) or course</h3>
<p>This form can be used to request permission to deliver:</p> <p>Programmes/modules currently validated for use by Tipperary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Programmes/modules which have not been delivered before in the centreProgramme/modules not delivered in the previous 3 years in the centreIndustry-certified course¹ already approved for delivery in a Tipperary location <p>Programmes or modules not currently validated for use by Tipperary ETB</p> <p>Industry-certified course¹ not currently approved for delivery in a Tipperary location</p>	
<h2>PR2 Form</h2>	<h3>Request to amend a programme or module or course or to amend how it is delivered</h3>
<p>This form can be used to request changes to a programme, modules or course after consultation with the FET QA Office or to request changes in how a programme is delivered;</p> <p>Request amendment(s) to programme/module(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">For CAS programmes - indicative content or assessment criteriaChanges to electives in a courseChanges to the mode of delivery eg face-to-face/blended/hybridAddition of validated modules to a programme	
<h2>PR3 FORM</h2>	<h3>Request to propose the design or redesign and development of programmes/modules /awards for validation or revalidation</h3>
<p>This form can be used to propose new developments or revise existing programmes, modules or awards after research and feasibility studies have been completed. This form can be used to request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Redevelopment of existing programmes/modules/awards for revalidationDevelopment of new programmes/modules/awards for validation by an awarding body	

Figure 1: Types of Programmes Requests

Note: for programme development/redevelopment (PR3 Form)

There are two distinct phases of governance needed for programme development or redevelopment requests.

Phase 1: initial identification of 'idea' for programme development or redevelopment

- **Initial dialogue:** there must be an initial dialogue between a FET Senior Manager and the Programme Proposer to discuss the idea for programme development or redevelopment. If the senior manager supports the idea, then the idea needs then to be further explored and presented to the FET SMT for team evaluation.
- **Complete PR3 Form Part 1:** to record the details of the initial proposal. Submit to the FET Senior Manager.
- **Present the initial proposal to FET SMT:** If the initial proposal is found viable and suitable, they will recommend the advancement to the formal (re)development stage and tentatively agree resources. Otherwise, they will reject the proposal.
 - If recommended, the Programme Proposer will then advance the research and refine the initial proposal into a final proposal, ready for final presentation to, and evaluation by, the FET SMT.



Phase Two:

- **Complete PR3 Form Part 2:** to record the details of the final proposal. Submit to the FET Senior Manager.
- **Present the final proposal to FET SMT:** The proposal will be heard by the FET SMT. Following the FET SMT's review and evaluation, they will:
 - Approve the advancement of the formal (re)development proposal and agree on final resources
 - Reject this proposal, or
 - Request further information.

Note: The FET QA Office may guide with the required research and documentation for programme development activity.

5. Communications

5.1 Outcomes from the programme approval process will be communicated either by the FET Senior Manager or by the FET QA Office, as appropriate. Decisions communicated will be:

- Approved, or, approved with conditions
- Rejected
- Request further information.

5.2 The FET QA Office is responsible for communications about validations between the ETB and the awarding body. Authorisation from the awarding body must be received by the ETB before centres can deliver the programme.

Note: Programmes may be advertised from the time of submission of the programme to the awarding body, but learners may not be enrolled on the programme until the awarding body has validated the programme.

Note: Newly validated programmes identify the centres where the programme can be delivered in Tipperary ETB. If a centre is not named on the initial validation application for the programme, the centre must request permission to use the validated programme using the PR1 Form.

5.3 The FET QA Office will inform all centres about new and changed programmes. The FET QA Office is responsible for ensuring the latest programme documentation is available on [QA SharePoint](#).

6. Expectations Post-Programme Approval

6.1 Any requests for further information from Tipperary ETB (to centres or Programme Proposers and Managers) or from awarding bodies will need to be supplied as soon as possible.

6.2 Upon approval to deliver a programme, all conditions of approval must be adhered to.

6.3 Advertising and promotional material for programmes must use the programme title as validated. For QQI programmes, use the correct award title(s), award type(s) and award class(es) indicating the level of the award(s) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

6.4 Programmes must be implemented according to the criteria and intended use for which it was originally validated.

6.5 Monitor and review the programme delivery to ensure ongoing adherence to the programme requirements and approval conditions and that the validated programme is implemented as intended.

6.6 Report, to the FET Senior Manager, any risks or changes that changes the ETB's or centre's ability to meet the requirements and conditions of the programme as validated.

Note: Programme boards may request periodic feedback on the delivery of new programmes. Providing feedback is a programme approval condition for delivering the programme.

7. Appeals

PAC decisions will be recorded on Quality Assurance SharePoint (QASP) for all centre viewing.

A formal appeal of a PAC decision can be lodged using the [Programme Approval Appeal Form](#) within **five working days** of receiving the outcome. Appeals submitted after this period will not be considered until the next PAC meeting.

The following persons can lodge an appeal:

- Programme proposers
- Other relevant persons (centre managers or coordinators from other centres/locations) objecting to an approved programme decision

Grounds for making an appeal:

- Criteria, information or evidence was not considered
- Correct procedures were not followed
- Process was not fairly conducted or managed.

8. Internal Monitoring and Review of this Procedure

This procedure will be systematically reviewed and amended as required by the FET QA Office, at least every five years to ensure it remains accurate and current.

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

9. Evidence of Implementation of this Procedure

The following sources of evidence can be used to demonstrate implementation of this procedure:

- Tipperary ETB's database for programme requests
- Records of PAC meetings and programme decisions
- Validation certificates of new or reviewed programmes

- Review of programmes being delivered at centres
- PLSS schedule of programmes and enrolled learners
- QQI list of validated programmes for Tipperary ETB.

10. Monitoring of Effectiveness of this Procedure

The following can be considered when evaluating the effective implementation of this procedure:

- Assessing and analysing programme requests for completeness and understanding of the process
- Assessing and analysing PAC processes and adherence to the Terms of Reference
- Evaluating feedback from PAC members, Programme Proposers and other stakeholders, staff and learners on the effectiveness of the approval process
- Reviewing programme delivery, assessing resources, staffing, infrastructure and administrative supports
- Reviewing programme feedback from stakeholders, staff or learners.