

UCD Quality Office Practice Notes

(31.08.2016)



Practice Notes are designed to provide the UCD community with key relevant information relating to national, international and/or sectoral quality assurance and enhancement policies, guidelines, legislation and other publications. They may be based on a particular topic or theme, or provide a quick reckoner vis-à-vis relevant legislation or publication. They are intended to be used as general outline guidance in relation to the subject matter and do not constitute a definitive statement of policy and/or procedure.

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

The principal legislation underpinning quality assurance in Irish higher education and training is currently the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#).

This act of government modernised and consolidated a number of provisions contained in the *Universities Act 1997*, as well as other pieces of legislation establishing key bodies responsible for overseeing higher education in Ireland. It amalgamated the **Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)**, the **Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)**, the **National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)** and the **Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB)** into a single entity now known as [Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(QQI\)](#), and it defines the constitution of this new entity, including its governance and management.

The Act also writes into Irish law the [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#) which had been established by the NQAI. The NFQ describes the qualifications of the Irish education and training system and how they interlink, including details about what learners should know, understand and be able to do on the basis of a given qualification. The NFQ also shows how learners can move from one qualification, or qualification level, to another within the Irish education system.



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

QQI is a state agency established by the 2012 Act, with a Board appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. In the area of qualifications, QQI is responsible for maintaining the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ), setting the standards for awards included on the NFQ and delivered through a wide variety of providers, and QQI can also itself act as an awarding body. QQI validates education and training programmes and makes extensive awards in the further education and training sector, including in the Education and Training Boards.

QQI also provides advice on recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland and on the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad, and QQI will maintain a directory of providers and awards in the NFQ. Another new function of QQI is to authorise the use of an **International Education Mark (IEM)** for providers. This will be awarded to providers of education and training (including English language training) who have demonstrated compliance with a statutory **Code of Practice for Provision of Education and Training to International Learners** (2015).

Of significance in the Act, are provisions regarding quality assurance, and the various obligations of providers to develop quality assurance policies and procedures. This also relates to quality assurance procedures as they relate to **Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs)** (ie Universities, the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)) and also for **Linked Providers**, such as UCD's Recognised Colleges.

In the area of quality assurance, QQI is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of quality assurance in further and higher education and training providers in Ireland on a seven-year cycle, and publishes the outcomes of these external periodic reviews.

The Act also establishes the authority, and the processes, for validation of programmes and awards, including joint award arrangements, procedures for access, transfer and progression, provides a basis for the establishment of a **Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners** (with reference to the **International Education Mark**), outlines requirements in relation to the protection of enrolled learners, as well as inclusion of a number of other miscellaneous provisions.