QUALITY ASSURANCE SUPPORT SERVICE
NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Quality Assurance Newsletter for Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board Further Education and Training Division (LCETB).

This issue of the newsletter includes -

1. LCETB Quality Assurance Support Service
2. Quality Assurance Governance Framework
3. Review of Assessment Templates
4. Updated QBS
5. Referencing Handbook
6. QASS Professional Development
7. Tobar RPL Project
8. QA Implementation and Working Groups
9. QQI Updates

1. LCETB QUALITY ASSURANCE SUPPORT SERVICE

The QA Support Service provides regional QA support to LCETB centres, colleges and schools, while also offering development and management support for cross-centre LCETB Quality Assurance processes.

LCETB QA Support Service may be contacted via email at QA@LCETB.IE

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

As part of an ETBI led quality enhancement project for the ETB sector, a Quality Assurance Governance Reference handbook was developed, then reviewed and endorsed for dissemination by the National ETB QA Strategy Group at its meeting in March.

This Governance Reference Handbook sets out the governance parameters and expectations that are suggested by the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016) and the

Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for the ETB sector (QQI, 2017). It also refers to the topic-specific guidelines developed for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship (QQI, 2016).

This Governance Reference Handbook will now be reviewed by our internal LCETB QA governance structures, and a subsequent recommendation from the QA Implementation Group to the FET Steering Group for decision on adoption of the framework.

Assessment Template review is now taking place – deadline date is Friday 27th April 2018.

3. REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT TEMPLATES - SURVEY

As agreed by the Assessment Template Working Group during template development, a process of review of the assessment templates is now taking place following implementation during the academic year 2017-2018. The following survey – Template Review is a key part of this review process, and will inform the QA Support Service on any updates that are required.

4. UPDATED QBS

All LCETB centres have been requested to log in to the Updated QBS system via the new MFA Multi Factor Authentication system, and return their VACSO login fob to the LCETB QA Support Service for return to QQI.

The Updated QBS system offers additional features to centres, such as:

- An 'easy find' facility for class groups.
- A direct link to the programmes validated by QQI and what you are certifying is available for centres that manually inputs data to QBS.
- A capacity to copy in learner details from an Excel spread sheet to QBS that will avoid direct data entry - 20 at a time.
- A new tab in Learner Details showing all the components completed within a centre - history of learner further education components.

5. REFERENCING HANDBOOK

The handbook has been developed by a national working group, co-ordinated by FESS and including representatives from many ETBs. It is designed to be used by both learners and tutors/teachers who are working at levels 5 and 6 and could also be useful as a starting point by those working at levels 3 and 4 where referencing is being introduced.

It is broken into two parts; the first part provides guidance and tips on the importance of referencing and how to do it. The second part presents a comprehensive list of information sources with examples of how to cite and reference each source. It is hoped that tutors/teachers will tailor the second section to suit the needs of the group. The handbook should prove a useful resource and due to be published in April.

We would appreciate feedback on the new Work Experience modules Levels 3-6 rolled out in September 2017. Any issue or errors you have identified could you email them to qa@lcetb.ie

6. QA SUPPORT SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A series of professional training sessions were delivered by the QA Support Service to over 115 participants.

Training sessions included:

- Developing Learners' Academic Writing Skills. Explores the issues around academic writing and the different ways of helping learners to improve their writing skills.
- Assessing Learner Evidence in FET for QQI. Focuses on the writing of assessment briefs in levels 1-3 and covers the writing of assessment briefs, marking schemes and exam questions in levels 4-6.
- Internal Verification (IV). The IV training looks at the role of the Internal Verifier, the IV process and includes a practical session where participants internally verify selected portfolios.
- QA Induction for New Assessors. Overview of the core elements of QA for new tutors/teachers.

If a centre has a recommendation for other training courses they would like to see, please let us know by emailing qa@lcetb.ie

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7. TOBAR – DEFENCE FORCES/ETB RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PROJECT

LCETB (along with nine other ETBs) are participating in a national pilot project whereby members of the Defence Forces can achieve QQI certification based on formal, non-formal and informal learning that they have acquired over their many years of service within the Defence Forces. The aim of the project is to help ease the transition of Defence Forces members back into civilian life and assist them in achieving certification that will increase their employability prospects in the 'civilian world'.

LCETB, in co-operation with Sarsfield Barracks, have identified potential candidates for the project and staff members will be trained on the methods used to gather and assess evidence for this type of certification. As this is a national project, all members of the Defence Forces participating should have the same experience regardless of which location (ETB) they are in. LCETB will be working closely with the national TOBAR RPL working group, FESS and QQI throughout the duration of the project.

Warmest congratulations to our wonderful administrator Úna and her new fiancé Kevin on their recent engagement. We wish them a lifetime of happiness, love and music together!

8. QA IMPLEMENTATION GROUP AND WORKING GROUPS

One of the major outcomes of the first meeting of the newly established QA Implementation Group was the formation of four QA Working Groups, with each Working Group focused on one of the following QA areas for quality improvement:

- City & Guilds – development of Supercentre model and roll-out of pilot approach to this model.
- Mentoring – working towards the development of a formalised tutor/teacher mentoring process.
- Marking Seminar and Exemplars – development of reference bank of exemplar assessment material and organisation of an event for LCETB learning practitioners with focus on best practice and guidance around marking of assessment material.
- Programme Revision – this working group is tasked with organising a process where feedback on suggested improvements to module descriptors is gathered and a process for making recommended revisions is developed.

Each Working Group has had two meetings, the outcomes of which will be brought to the next QA Implementation Group meeting on April 24th. The next edition of the QA Newsletter will have more detail on each of the Working Group's progress and plans for the upcoming academic year.

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9. QQI UPDATES

QQI publishes feedback on review of award standards
(https://www.qqi.ie/News/Pages/QQI-publishes-feedback-on-review-of-award-standards.aspx)

QQI published a discussion document in 2017 titled 'Review of QQI Award Standards: Approach and Schedule Discussion Paper' referring to award standards at levels 1 to 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Following both an online survey and workshops for Further Education and Training and Higher Education and Training providers, the feedback from all sources has been consolidated into a report entitled 'Consolidated Feedback on Review of QQI Awards Standards'. It reflects the range of opinion, ideas and suggestions received. QQI is now planning the next steps for standards review and will publish details when finalised.

QQI publishes new Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes
(https://www.qqi.ie/News/Pages/QQI-publishes-new-Quality-Assurance-Guidelines-for-Blended-Learning-Programmes.aspx)

In 2017, QQI published a White Paper on Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning. Following a period of public consultation, which ended on 3 November 2017, QQI has now published the final version of the Topic-Specific QA Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.

A green paper will be developed to encourage discussion on the impact of online learning technology/digital capacity on teaching and learning within the existing education and training context. This is with a view to considering the necessity for a more comprehensive set of quality assurance guidelines on online learning.

Green paper on assessment published
(https://www.qqi.ie/News/Pages/Green-Paper-on-Assessment-published.aspx)

QQI's Green Paper on Assessment sets out a framework and context for discussing assessment issues.

Using the Green Paper as a basis, QQI aim to create some focussed opportunities for discussion of the issues through workshops and focus groups before collecting written feedback on the issues from stakeholders. These will take place during autumn 2018.

QQI are seeking feedback from stakeholders on the issues and options contained in this Green Paper.   The closing date for responses is 7 December 2018, by email to consultation@qqi.ie

QQI publishes report on L1-3 award standards review
(https://www.qqi.ie/News/Pages/Levels-1-3-Award-Standards-Review.aspx)

QQI has published Levels 1-3 Awards Standards Review. The report describes the activities undertaken so far in the review process, feedback received and issues identified which require further consideration. It reflects the range of opinion, ideas and suggestions received in relation to the existing Common Award System (CAS) standards and the development of broad standards (i.e. non-CAS).

QQI is now planning the next steps for standards review and will publish details when finalised. To support this, two distinct online surveys are included in the report and some L1-3 workshops will take place in the coming months.

The Quality Assurance Support Service welcomes all feedback on this newsletter. We also plan to include examples of centre best practice in QA in future newsletters – please contact qa@lcetb.ie

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