

Quality Assurance in VET: Ireland

This document provides an overview of quality assurance in VET in the respective country. It covers information on VET systems and how quality assurance takes place, which organisations are responsible for VET policy and any recent developments in VET policy.

VET system and quality assurance



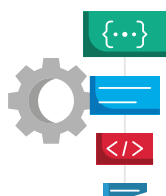
Overview of the VET system and how quality assurance takes place

Publicly funded VET is delivered primarily by or contacted through the 16 statutory, regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs) across Ireland, under the funding and strategic guidance of the Further Education and Training Authority of Ireland (SOLAS). ETBs may collaborate to meet their responsibilities, through the work of the Education Training Board Ireland (ETBI). Provision spans from levels 1 to 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and provides for post-compulsory school/adult full-time, part-time provision, including in formal, workplace and community settings. Public funding for VET provision is administered through Ireland funding council for VET (SOLAS).

Some VET provision is provided by independent (commercial, not-for-profit, and voluntary) providers. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the statutory agency responsible for the external quality assurance of all post-compulsory education and training nationally, including universities. QQI is the custodian of the NFQ, and it is responsible for maintaining and developing it, as well as setting the standards for awards as an awarding body, making awards at levels 1 to 10 of the NFQ [European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 1-8].¹

Ireland does not separate IVET from CVET, and it incorporates VET, along with adult education and training, up to EQF Level 5, as further education and training (FET).

More information about the VET system in Ireland can be found on Cedefop's VET in Europe database: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/ireland>





System-level QA arrangements

At a system level, QQI provides intelligence on the quality of provision to SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Education. SOLAS was established in 2013 and introduced a range of performance measures that are used to negotiate targets for regional commissioning authorities. Most of these reflect EQAVET indicators, such as completion rates, placement rates and investment in staff development.

SOLAS established the programme and learner support system (PLSS), which gathers learner data from their first engagement with the FET



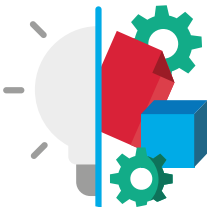
¹ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/ireland-u2>

	<p>sector. Data collection includes the monitoring of learners' destinations on leaving FET and labour market outcomes (employment, unemployment or inactivity), which is a key measure in evaluating training programmes designed for labour market entry. Data is processed and analysed by the data analytics unit in SOLAS to show the type of FET (including VET) programmes which are best suited to different outcomes.²</p>
 <p>Provider-level QA arrangements</p>	<p>Within CVET, quality assurance (QA) is conducted through provider accreditation and programme validation. QA is a condition for accreditation and is becoming a condition for funding. VET providers who wish to offer QQI awards are required to agree their QA with QQI, as prescribed in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012³.</p> <p>For IVET, school-based QA arrangements focus on schools' self-evaluation and external inspections. Self-assessments were formally introduced in 2012 as a collaborative, reflective process for internal school review and improvement. The 2016 quality assurance framework called 'Looking at Our School' for post-primary schools uses a six-step evaluation cycle:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify focus. 2. Gather evidence. 3. Evaluate and make judgements. 4. Write and share report and improvement plan. 5. Put improvement plan into action. 6. Monitor actions and evaluate impact. <p>The Department of Education and Skills (DES) introduced an evaluation initiative for post-primary schools called the 'Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning' (WSE-MLL). This is a process of external evaluation of the work of post-primary schools, carried out by the DES Inspectorate. There is an emphasis on school management, leadership and learning in post-primary schools.⁴</p>
 <p>Which organisation(s) are responsible for VET policy?</p>	<p>SOLAS is responsible for decision making and implementing further education and training, including most VET provision in Ireland, in conjunction with the 16 ETBs.</p> <p>SOLAS and ETBs are agencies of the Department of Further and Higher Education Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).</p> <p>Since 2016, and the reform of apprenticeship, Ireland's higher education authority also plays a role in the oversight of VET programmes that are</p>

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

³ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html>

⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

	<p>delivered in higher education institutions (namely Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities).⁵</p>
 <p>Recent policy developments (in the last 12 months)</p>	<p>The most recent policy developments include the establishment of the National Tertiary Office tasked with the creation of joint further and higher education degree programmes.</p> <p>Other policy developments include: A national Apprenticeship Action Plan, public consultation on Quality Assurance Guidelines for providers of programmes supported by digital education, ongoing enhancement of QA across further education and training providers via monitoring, re-engagement and external reviews. Information can be found here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021 to 2025. • Quality Assurance Guidelines for providers of programmes supported by digital education. • QA Approval Reports: www.https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=approvalreports <p>Further details below regarding monitoring and reviews.</p>
 <p>Priority areas for QA in your country</p>	<p>The priority areas for development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Apprenticeship Action Plan including the governance of apprenticeship programmes and partnerships. • Publication and implementation of national broad award standards for NFQ levels 1- 4 (EQF 1-3) qualifications. • Completion of a re-engagement process with all further education and training providers to ensure robust QA practices across the system. • External reviews of further education and training providers (more information below).
<p>Specific projects in the country (optional)</p>	
	<p>In 2021 QQI commenced the inaugural review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance of VET in 16 regional Education and Training Boards. The reviews were conducted by an external team, which included national and international experts, learners, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The Quality of FET in the Education and Training Boards Report from this inaugural review was launched in March 2023.</p>

⁵ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/ireland-u2>

Please provide a short description of recent projects or initiatives in the field of QA in VET that you would like to highlight for your country

For more information and details of the reviews and monitoring please see www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training/quality-monitoring-and-review.



Which organisation(s) are responsible for the project / initiative

QQI is the external quality assurance body for further and higher education and training in Ireland.

Use of EQAVET labels

Do you use an EQAVET label or seal to certify VET providers in your country?

No

Yes