Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the National Framework of Qualifications & Professional Body Engagement

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Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

SAQA Professional Body Forum | November 2023

Overview

- QQI – who we are and what we do

- Finding Common Ground: QQI's programme with engagement with professional bodies

- Accreditation Principles for professional bodies; , HEIs & QQI

- The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

- Inclusion of awards within the NFQ

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Who are we?

- National (external) **quality assurance agency** for <u>tertiary</u> education leading to awards in the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) (enhancement-led approach) – institutional quality review, development & maintenance of statutory QA guidelines...

- National **qualifications authority** (steward – alongside other awarding bodies in the State – of the NFQ)

- **Awarding body** (approval of QA, programme validation, certification, delegation of authority to make awards...)

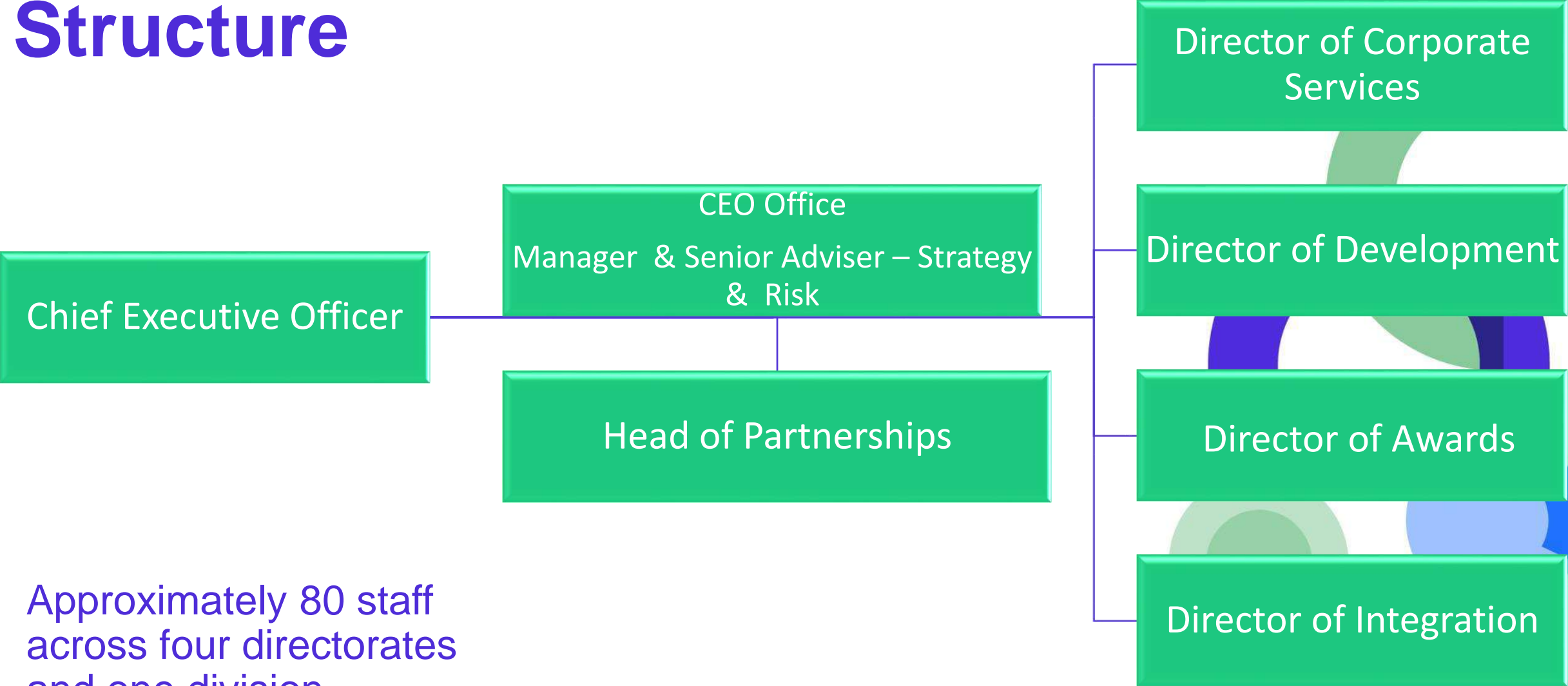- Regulator for **academic integrity**

Who are we?

- Established in **2012**

- Amalgamation of four antecedent bodies: **Further Education and Training Awards Council** (FETAC), **Higher Education and Training Awards Council** (HETAC), **National Qualifications Authority of Ireland** (NQAI), **Irish Universities Quality Board** (IUQB)

- Part of the then Department of Education and Skills' plans to achieve structural reform of the education system

- **Objectives**:
    o To provide a joined-up service to learners and education and training providers
    o To open up flexible, quality assured learning pathways within the context of the NFQ
    o Increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness

Annual Report: Department of Education and Skills 2012

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Who are we? Organisational Structure

Chief Executive Officer

CEO Office

Manager & Senior Adviser – Strategy & Risk

Head of Partnerships

Director of Corporate Services

Director of Development

Director of Awards

Director of Integration

Approximately 80 staff across four directorates and one division

The Irish tertiary education landscape
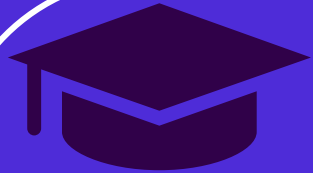
8 universities (Self-accrediting)

& the National University of Ireland

NFQ L7-10

5 technological universities

(Self-accrediting)

NFQ L6-10

2 institutes of technology

(Self-accrediting to NFQ L9)

NFQ L6-10

36 private independent higher education providers

(Awarding body: QQI)

NFQ L6-9

HE
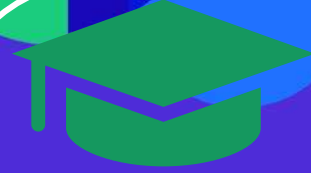
16 education and training boards – providers of public FET

(Awarding body: QQI)

NFQ L1-6

Almost 200 private providers of FET

(Awarding body: QQI)

NFQ L1-6

FET

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Professional bodies in Ireland

- Complex landscape – approx. 170 bodies active in public HEIs and larger private HEIs
  (PARN Report on Professional Body Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland, 2017)

- Variety of missions and functions across these 170 bodies...

- A smaller number of professional statutory regulatory bodies (PSRBs) – QQI engages regularly with approx. 35 of these

- Activities include: programme accreditation, monitoring & review, approval of exemptions for advanced entry, recognition, prescription, validation, licence to practice...

- QQI interest in considering how these professional engagements can be better aligned with academic validation processes

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PSRB
Professional Statutory
and Regulatory Bodies

Professional bodies in Ireland

- 2018 QQI report on professional body accreditation considered the accreditation processes of 11 bodies...(Accreditation/Approval of Higher Education Programmes by Professional Bodies)

CORU (multi profession, health & social care regulator)	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Dental Council	Pre-Hospital Emergency Healthcare Council
Engineers Ireland	Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland
Irish Planning Institute	Society of Chartered Surveyors in Ireland
Medical Council	Teaching Council
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	

Professional bodies in Ireland

Key findings of Accreditation/Approval of Higher Education Programmes by Professional Bodies:

- Accreditation standards, processes in flux.
- Common challenges: lack of clearly defined appeals processes, failure to define 'material change', inability of some PSRBs to charge accreditation fees placed heavy burden on PSRBs.
- No platform/forum through which PSRBs could communicate/exchange on common issues...

Professional bodies in Ireland

- Establishment of **Finding Common Ground** programme in 2019

- Adoption of [Principles for Professional Engagements with Education Providers ('accreditation principles')](#) by QQI in 2021

Finding Common Ground programme

Objectives:

- To provide a **platform for communication and exchange** between PSRBs/QQI/HEIs.
- To **disseminate examples of good practice**.
- To **enhance all stakeholders' understandings** of the broader accreditation and education landscapes.
- To **encourage and support collaboration** between PSRBs/HEIs/QQI with a view to ensuring facilitating greater alignment/dovetailing of processes.

Finding Common Ground programme

- Quarterly events that provide space to network and discuss matters of common interest (PSRBs only; PSRBs & HEIs).

Collaborative Initiatives between PSRBs & HEIs

Revising Policy and Process: A Collaborative Project between the Society for Chartered Surveyors Ireland, TU Dublin and Atlantic TU (25 mins)

James Lonergan, Director of Education and CPD, SCSI

Dr Roisín Murphy, Senior Lecturer, School of Surveying & Construction Managemer.., TU Dublin

Supporting Integrity & Responsible Citizenship in Future Professionals

Conversation Starter (3 mins)

A conversation between **Dr Helen Gniel**, Director, Higher Education Integrity Unit, Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and **Dr Eimear Brown**, Dean, Honorable Society of King's Inns, exploring how regulators and education providers can support the quality and integrity of qualifications and the inculcation of integrity in future professionals.

- Communication hub, hosted on Microsoft Teams

QQI-PSRB Engagement Hub

General

Mairéad Boland 22/11 14:01
Final Finding Common Ground event of the year | Alex Hotel, Dublin 2 | 5 December 2023
Dear QQI-PSRB Engagement Hub colleagues,

A reminder that our final Finding Common Ground event of 2023 will take place in the Alex Hotel, Dublin 2, on 5 December from 10:00-13:00. We are delighted to have QQI's chair, Professor Irene Sheridan, as chair of this event.

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PSRB
Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

Accreditation principles

- High-level, non-prescriptive principles based on the Universities Australia and Professions Australia Joint Statement of Principles for Professional Accreditation

- **Objectives:**
    - To highlight the importance and benefits of **professional regulation and accreditation**.
    - To delineate the respective **roles of the actors involved in accreditation** and other engagements.
    - To **stimulate conversation** and **highlight opportunities for collaboration and alignment** of professional and academic processes.
    - To encourage the **reduction/elimination of unnecessary administrative burden**.

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Accreditation principles

- Endorsed by 16 PSRBs, 15 public HEIs, 8 private HEIs and QQI to date.

- Endorsement under consideration by further bodies (PSRBs and HEIs)

- Incorporated within the revised accreditation standards and criteria of two PSRBs (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, Engineers Ireland).

- Evidence of impact in pilot joint/aligned accreditation processes (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland...).

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About us ⌄   What we do ⌄   Gaeilge ⌄   CAO advice

Home > News > Strong Endorsement for Principles for Professional Engagements with Education Providers

Strong Endorsement for Principles for Professional Engagements with Education Providers

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PSRB Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

Further areas for exploration & collaboration...

- Assessment

- Academic and professional integrity

- QA/QE of work-integrated learning (including practice placement)

- Innovation in regulation
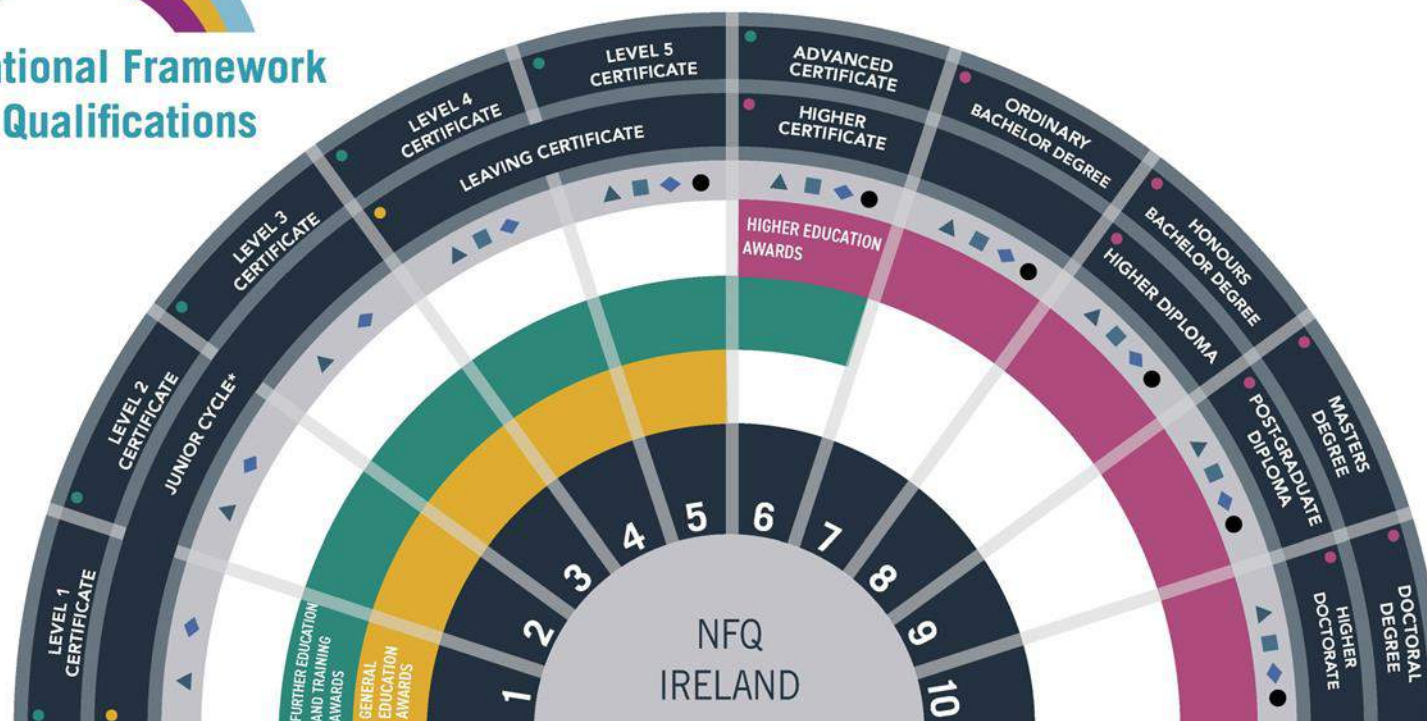
- Student engagement and partnership

National Framework of Qualifications

NFQ IRELAND

Levels 1–10

Major Awards (outer rings):
- Level 1 Certificate
- Level 2 Certificate
- Level 3 Certificate
- Junior Cycle*
- Level 4 Certificate
- Level 5 Certificate
- Leaving Certificate
- Advanced Certificate
- Higher Certificate
- Ordinary Bachelor Degree
- Honours Bachelor Degree
- Higher Diploma
- Post-Graduate Diploma
- Masters Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Higher Doctorate

Further Education and Training Awards
General Education Awards
Higher Education Awards

CLASSES OF AWARD

⌒ **Major Awards:** named in the outer rings, are the principal class of awards made at a level

▲ **Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award

■ **Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award

◆ **Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement

● **Professional Awards:** are for occupation-orientated qualifications including apprenticeships

*Please refer to NCCA website, ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/

IRISH REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS

For more information on
- Qualifications
- Providers
- Courses

visit www.irq.ie

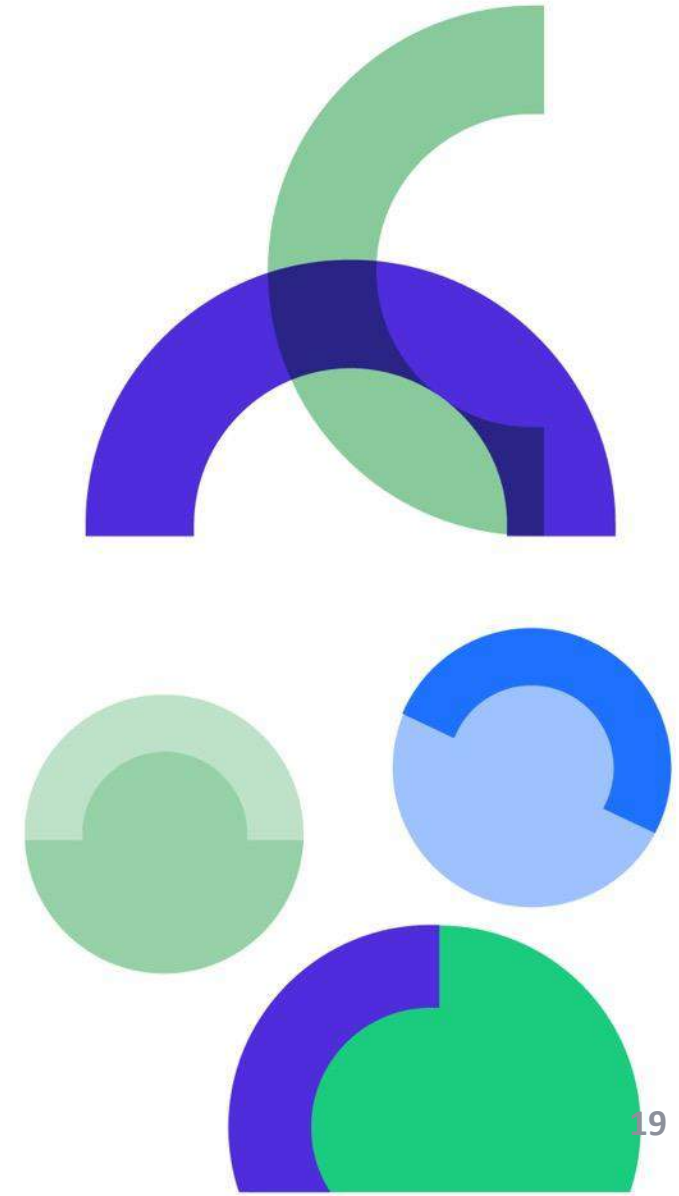Supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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National Framework of Qualifications & QQI

- QQI promotes, maintains, further develops, and implements the NFQ

- Promote use of NFQ by awarding bodies – **shared responsibility**

- Protect reputation & integrity of NFQ

- NFQ is a trustworthy structure for establishing and comparing qualifications

- Contributes to the recognition and reputation of Irish qualifications nationally & internationally

- Referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) & Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)

Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global
Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility of qualifications, nationally and internationally.

- NFQ — Irish National Framework of Qualifications
- EQF — European Qualifications Framework
- QF-EHEA — Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
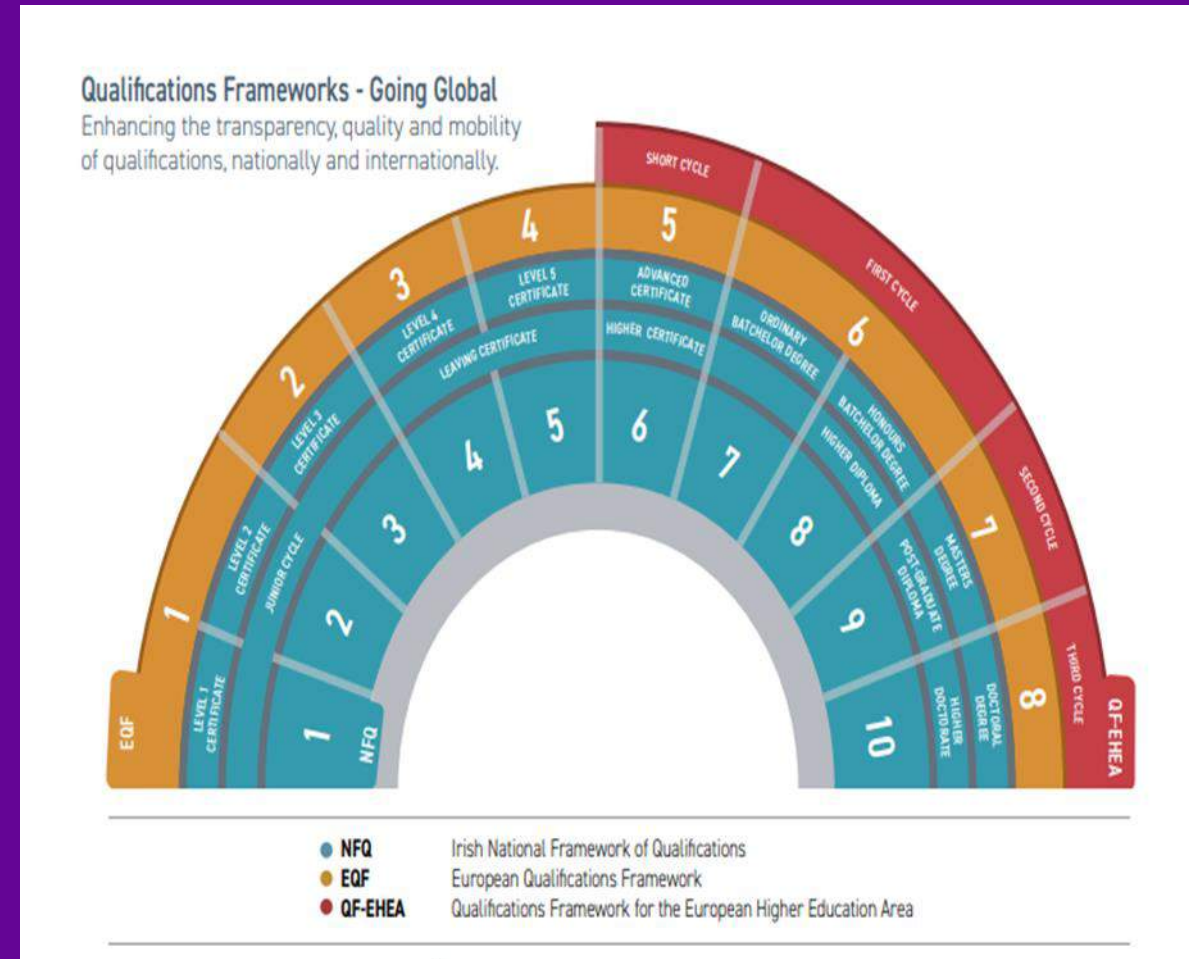
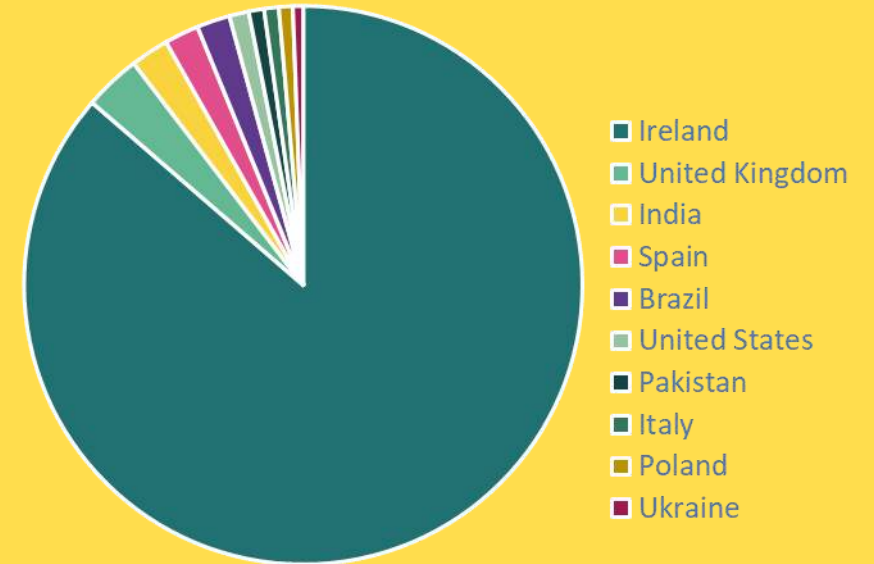# Inclusion of Awards in the Framework

- School awards – historical/legacy placement

- University & IOT awards – autonomous awarding powers supported
  by Joint Sectoral Protocol between QQI and DABs

- QQI – validation of programmes

National Framework of Qualifications

Fit for purpose qualifications appropriately levelled and offered by awarding bodies with transparent and effective arrangements for the development, design, review, delivery and certification of qualifications.

- Universities
- Institutes of Technology
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- Department of Education
- Listed Awarding Bodies

Irish Register of Qualifications

- 11397 Qualifications.

- 242 Providers.

- 18 statutory awarding bodies – QQI data automatically transfers to register.

- 16 designated awarding bodies completed an upload to the IRQ in 2023

- Data transfer from IRQ to the European QDR took place January 2023.

- The IRQ continues to grow its audience with 8432 new users in 2022. An increase of over 5000 for the same period in 2021.

Top 10 Pageviews by Countries 2022

- Ireland
- United Kingdom
- India
- Spain
- Brazil
- United States
- Pakistan
- Italy
- Poland
- Ukraine

Listed Awarding Bodies

Professional, sectoral and/or international awarding body without statutory awarding powers in Ireland

Awarding powers derived through statute; another jurisdiction or professional representation

Seeks voluntary access to the NFQ

Already operating – meeting a need

Trusted, reputable organisations

Heterogenous

Prospective LABs

- ACCA
- CIMA
- CPA
- Chartered Accountants Ireland
- Kings Inns
- Law Society
- Irish Insurance Institute
- Irish Tax Institute
- CIPD
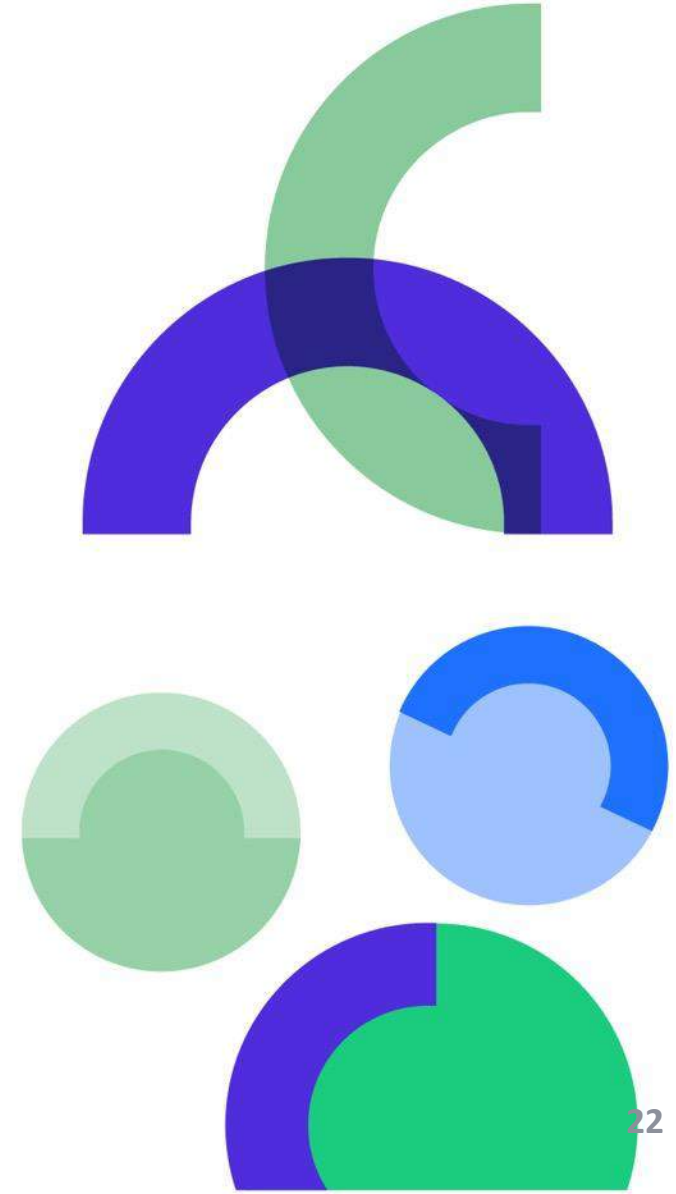
Purpose & Value Proposition

- To provide learners with a greater **choice** of quality assured awards
- To provide assurance and **confidenc**e to learners about awards being undertaken and the awarding bodies delivering them
- To **recognise** the learning already being undertaken by learners by providing a mechanism to include such awards in the Framework
- To ensure the National Framework of Qualifications remains **relevant and responsive** in a changing education and training landscape
- To **preserve** alignment with international frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework

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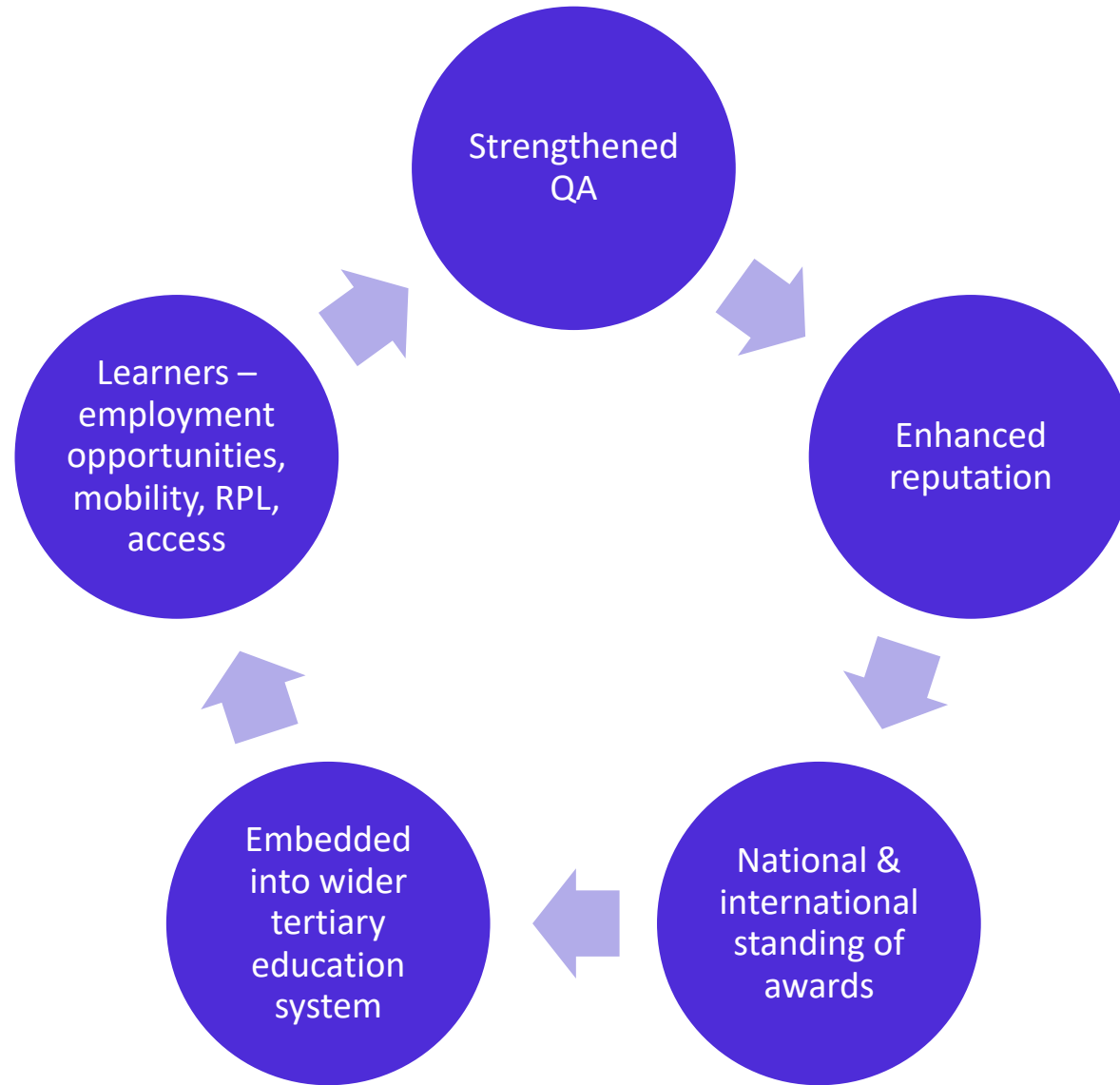
LABs Policies

1. Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for LABs

- for development of QA procedures under S55 (F) 2 & Section 28

2. Policies & Criteria for establishment of Listed Awarding Body

- has capability and capacity to make awards that protect the integrity of qualifications system

3. Policies & Criteria for inclusion of awards in the Framework

- Awards add value to the qualifications system by meeting the needs of learners and wider stakeholders
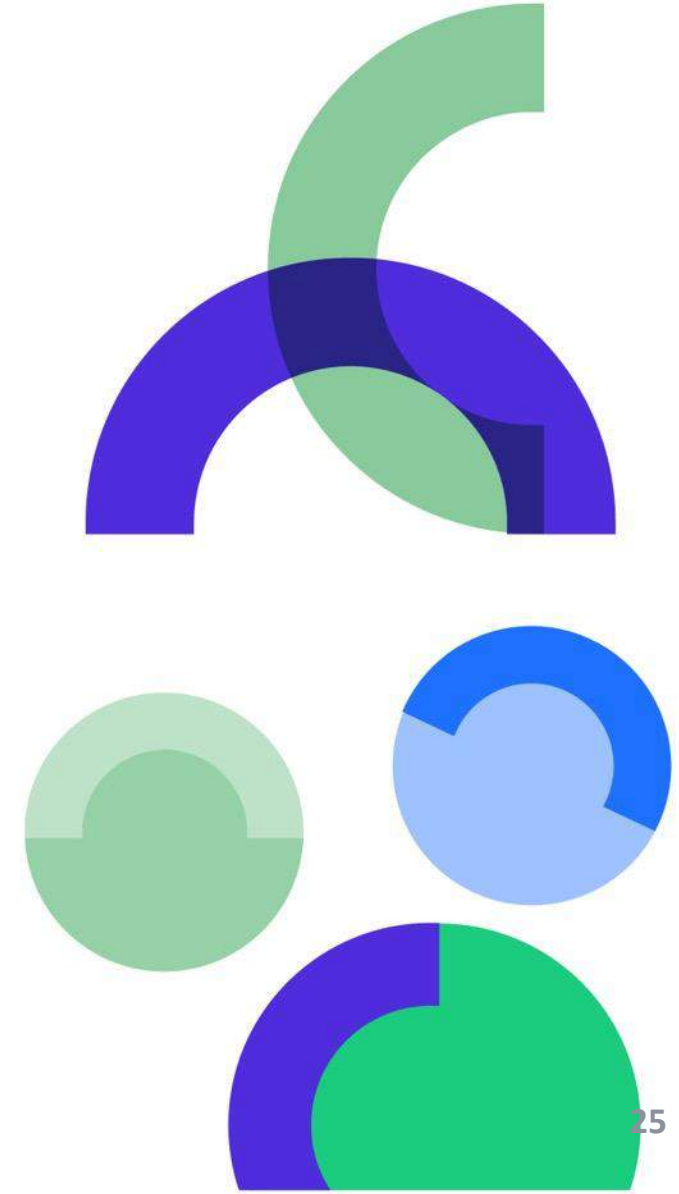
Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for LABs

- Specifically deals with approval, monitoring & review of associated providers
  - To include compliance with Ministerial regulations for due diligence
- Requirement to take all necessary action to retain status as a LAB and for ongoing inclusion of awards in NFQ
- Embedding of NFQ into qualification design, development, review procedures
- Certification of learners
- Issuing of Certificate & Diploma Supplements
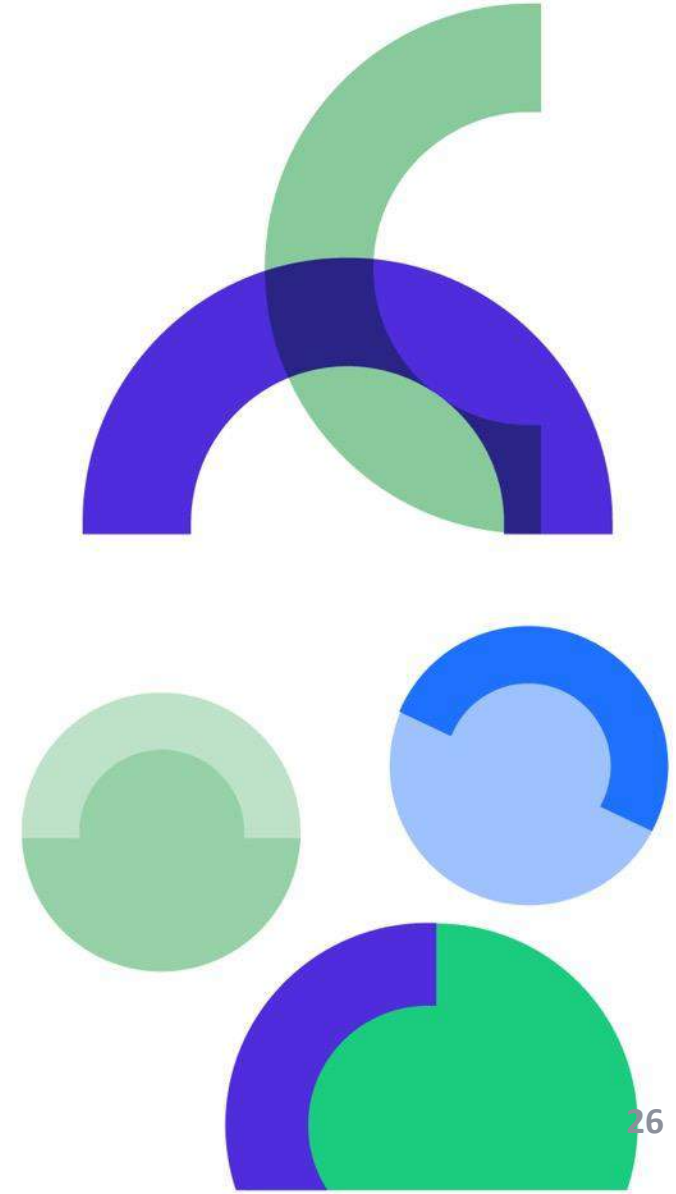
Due Diligence

- Part of application to be established as a LAB

- Ministerial regulations
  - reasonable assurance to QQI that the provider has capacity & capability to implement quality assurance procedures & provide programmes of education & training consistent with the requirements of the Act

- 'Corporate Fitness' – applies to directors, shadow directors & beneficial owners
  - Fit and proper person
  - Adequate financial & human resources
  - Viability of the business
  - Good corporate governance
  - Sufficient internal management & control
  - Sufficient financial controls
  - Compliance with relevant legislation & other obligations
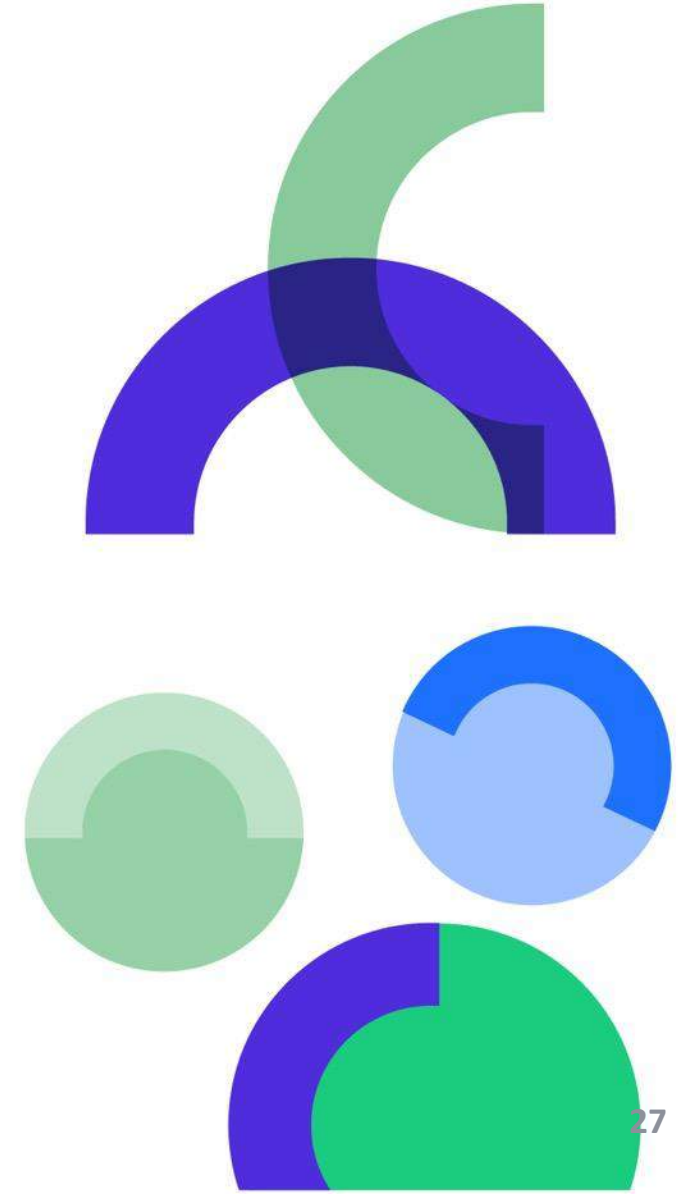
Policies & Criteria

Establishment as LAB

- Minimum requirements & endorsement by public body
- Capacity & competence to design, approve and make awards
- Suitable QA procedures
- Credit accumulation
- Transparency

Inclusion of awards

- Need for the award
- Appropriately referenced to NFQ
- Assessment
- ATP/RPL/credit
- Information for learners

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Establishment as a LAB

Scope of Approval

- Establishment as a LAB is with reference to the awards proposed to be made by it.

- Limited by scope of approval including:
  - Level of awards
  - Class of awards
  - Subject areas
  - Provision type (ie) blended, online, face to face

- Can apply to extend scope of approval when applying to include additional awards in the Framework
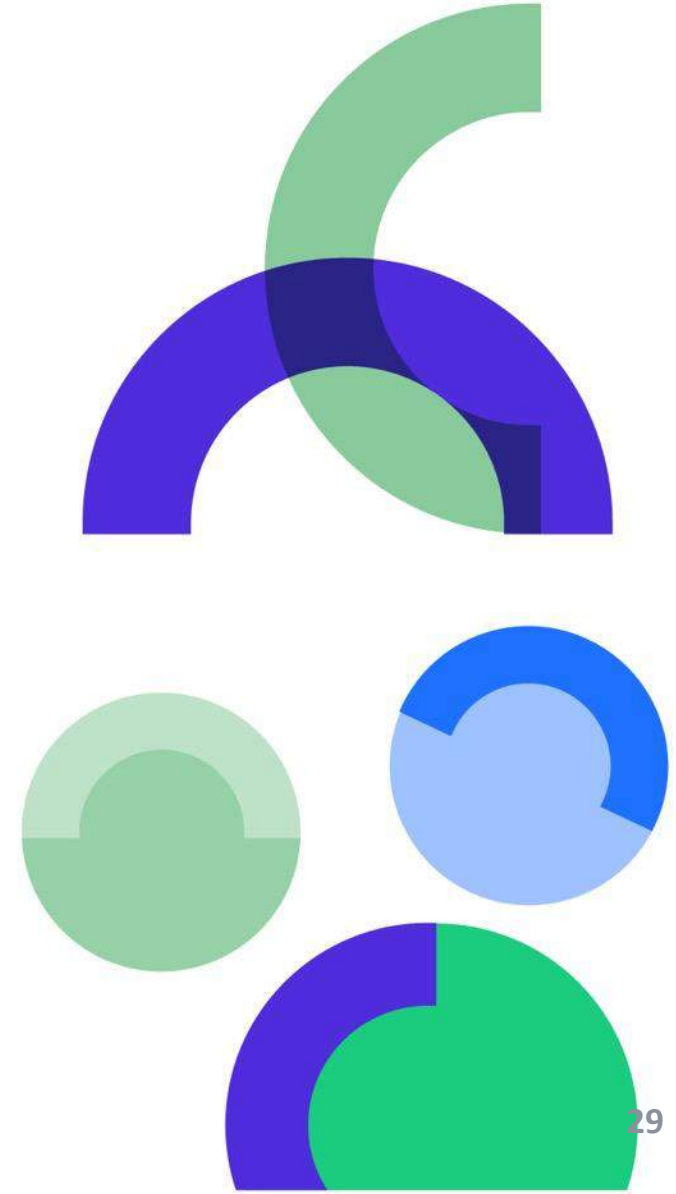
High Level Approach to Application

Minimum requirements

- Evidence of meeting minimum requirements – in advance of submitting full application
- Guidance provided
- Templates developed

Establishment

- Due diligence assessment (unless exempt)
- Submission of QA procedures (to be informed by Core QA guidelines, QA guidelines for LABs & QA guidelines for digital learning)
- Submission of ATP procedures (to be informed by the ATP policy restatement)
- Completed application form (will be provided)
- Self-evaluation against criteria (can be grouped. Can specify ones that don't apply)
- Evidence of approval of associated providers (unless relying on QQI approval, which must be stated)
- Supporting evidence (links to published materials appropriate. Likely re-use)

Inclusion of Awards

- Award information – name, level, award type, credit volume, learning outcomes (published on IRQ)
- Evidence of need for award – historical evidence, stakeholder feedback
- Evidence of suitability of award – recent reviews, feedback, stakeholder engagement
- Self-evaluation against criteria (can be grouped)
- Supporting evidence – examples of application of internal governance
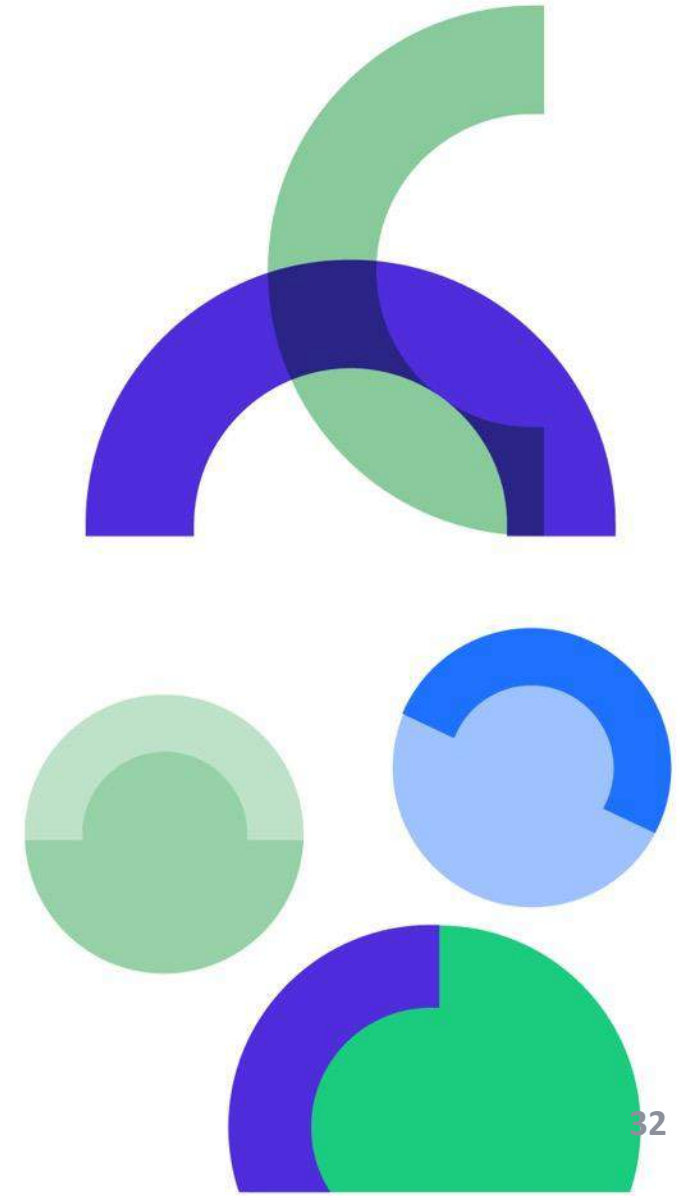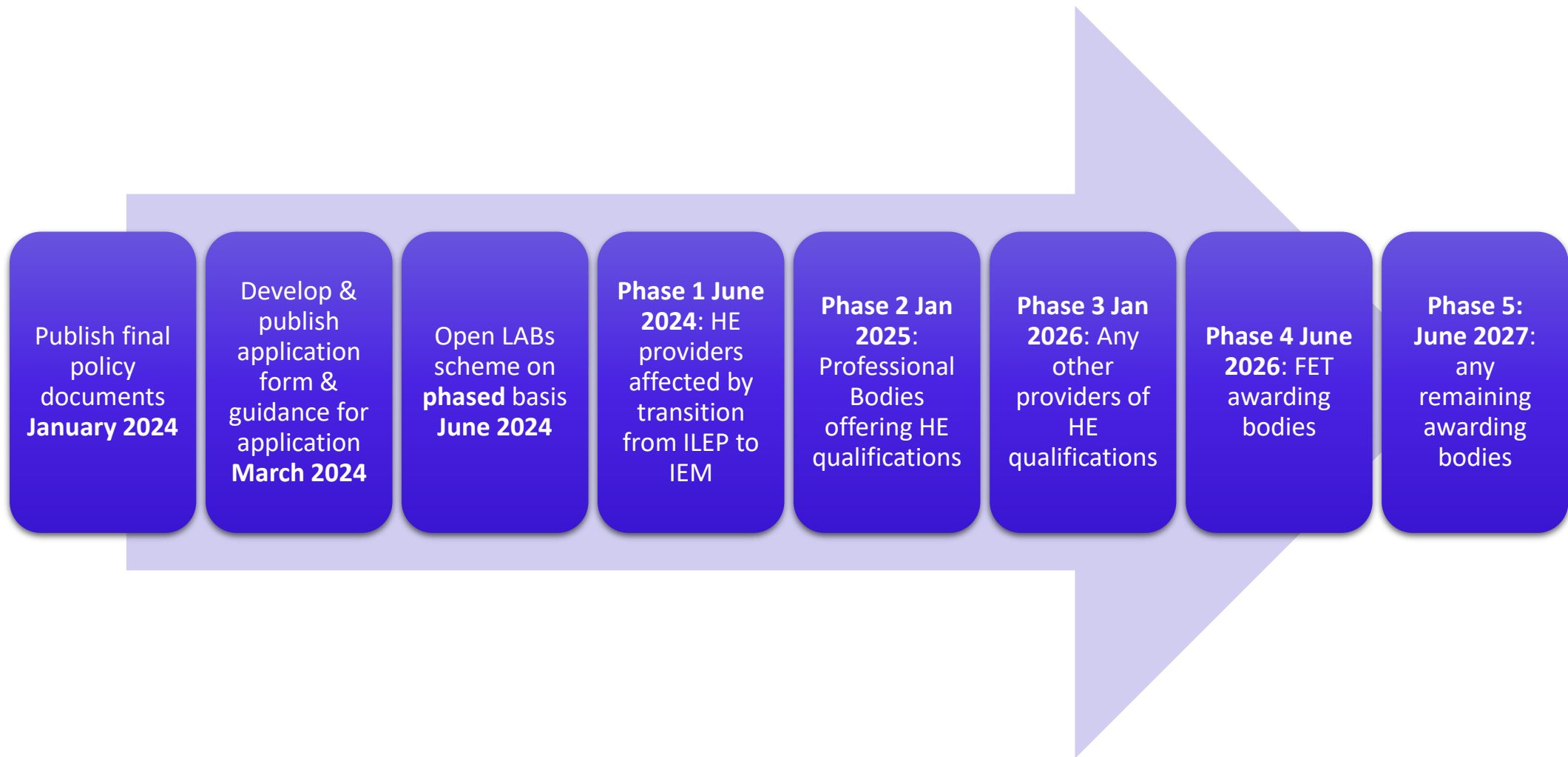
Additional Information

- LABs required to contribute to qualifications systems in terms of learner pathways, ATP, microcreds and other projects that may arise

- Certainty around awards – expected to be included on ongoing basis

- LAB continuously reviews need for award

- LABs must review associated providers every 5 years

- Limited to learners enrolled in the State

- Provide information to QQI annually

- Protection of Enrolled Learner Charge
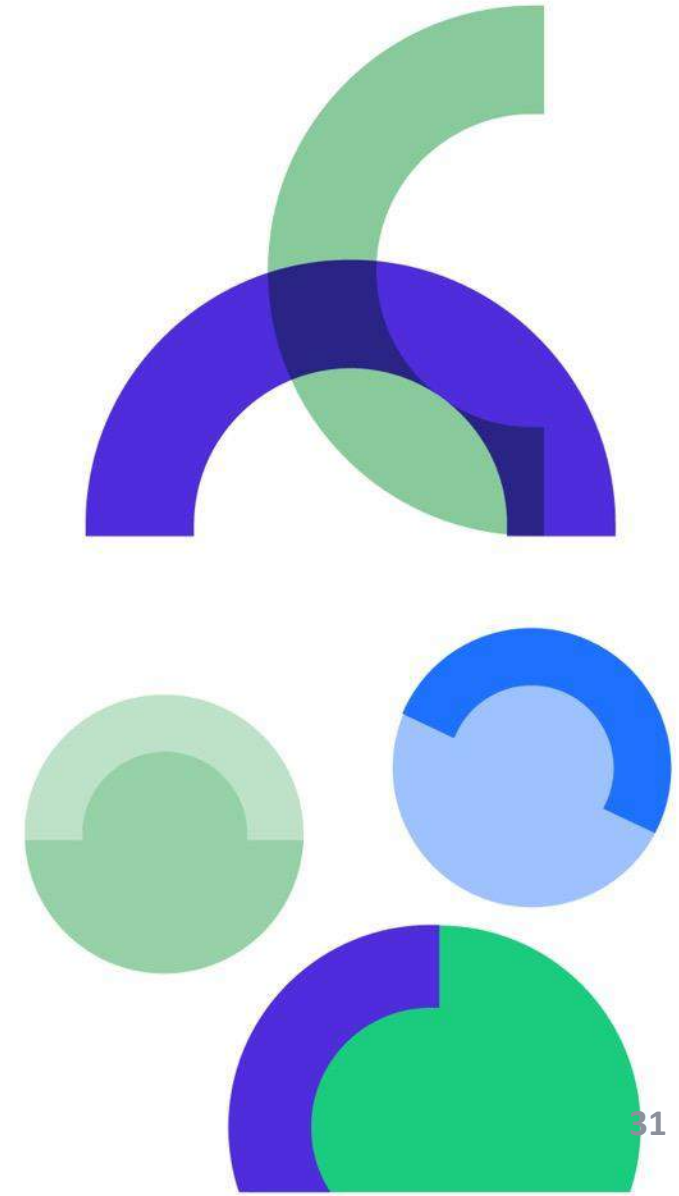
LABs in the Qualifications System

- Shared responsibility for implementation of NFQ

- Ensure comparability and transparency of NFQ qualifications

- Contribute to building trust in the NFQ, awards and the qualifications system

- Ensure reputation and integrity of NFQ

- Recognition and reputation of Irish qualifications nationally and internationally

- Ensure standard of award is achieved by all learners

- Issue appropriate documentation to confirm the achievement of the award

- Retain records of all awards issued

Publish final policy documents **January 2024**

Develop & publish application form & guidance for application **March 2024**

Open LABs scheme on **phased** basis **June 2024**

Phase 1 June 2024: HE providers affected by transition from ILEP to IEM

Phase 2 Jan 2025: Professional Bodies offering HE qualifications

Phase 3 Jan 2026: Any other providers of HE qualifications

Phase 4 June 2026: FET awarding bodies

Phase 5: June 2027: any remaining awarding bodies

Fees & Charges

- QQI permitted under legislation to set fees for:
  - Application to be established as a LAB
  - Application to include awards in the Framework
  - Periodic review

- QQI permitted to set annual charge for:
  - Ongoing inclusion of awards in the Framework

- Fees & charges approved by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science
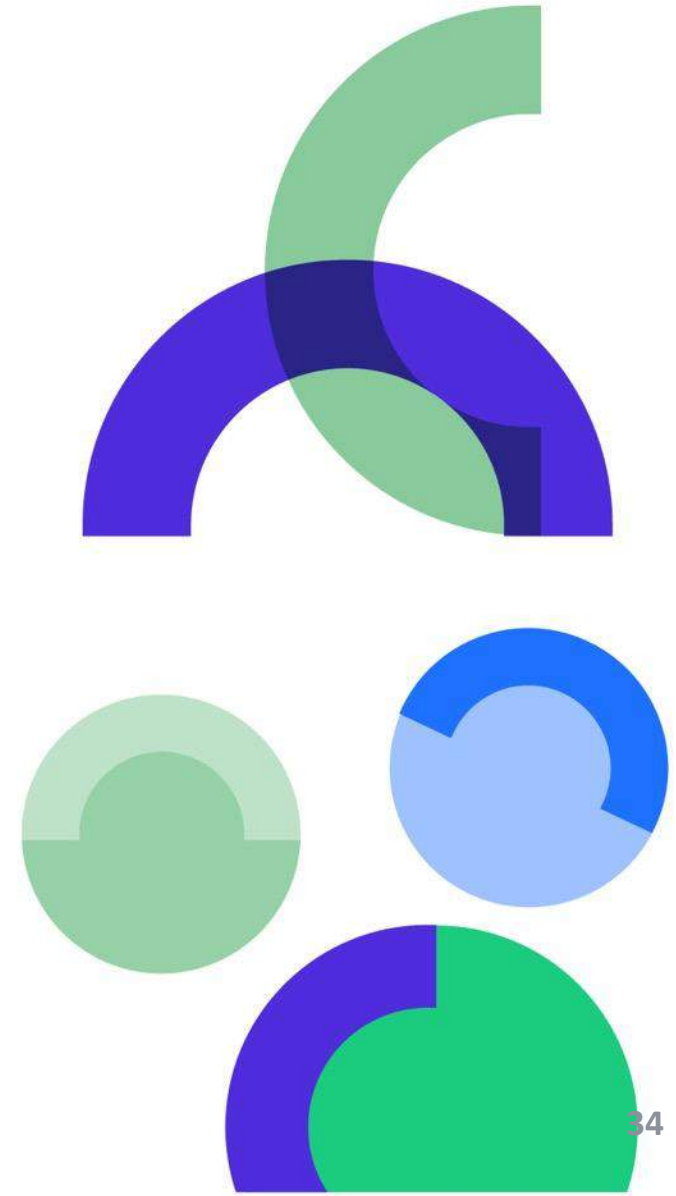
Proposal

- Delivers on initial ambition of the NFQ
- In keeping with European policy ambition
- Scheme only successful if LABs established & award included in the Framework
- Balance the cost & burden associated to remain attractive as is voluntary scheme
- Heterogenous & potential for collaboration with overseas regulator reducing direct burden to QQI
- Small numbers overall – 15 in 5 years. Not significant income stream
- Receive funding from EU of approx. €150k per year to implement framework. Can offset costs against this funding as needed
- Will review fees & charges after 5 years of operation and may increase for full cost recovery

- **Application for establishment & inclusion of awards – 10k**
- **Inclusion of additional awards in first 5 years – 0**
- **Annual charge – 3k**
- **Periodic review (once every 7 years) – 0-10k**

Thank you

Any questions?

Please get in touch if you'd like to find out more!

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