Quality Assurance Policy

Version 1.0

May



Policy Development Details

| Policy Name | Programme Development and Approval Policy |
|-----------------------|---|
| QQI Core Guideline | 1. Governance and Management of Quality |
| Policy applies to | □ Specific (outline organisational unit, etc.) ☑ FET Staff ☑ FET Students |
| Approved by | Donegal ETB FET Service Quality Council |
| Approval Date | May 2021 |
| Effective Date | June 2021 |
| Review Date | June 2022 |
| Version | Version 1.0 |
| Reference Documents | QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines Disability Act 2005 Data Protection Act 2018 Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 Strategy Statement 2017-2021, Lean ar Aghaidh. Donegal ETB Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI |

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Abbreviation List

| Acronym | Definition | |
|---------|--|--|
| BTEI | Back to Education Initiative | |
| CE | Chief Executive | |
| CPD | Continuous Professional Development | |
| DETB | Donegal Education and Training Board | |
| ETB | Education and Training Board | |
| FET | Further Education and Training | |
| HR | Human Resources | |
| NFQ | National Framework of Qualifications | |
| PLC | Post Leaving Certificate | |
| PLSS | Programme Learner Support System | |
| QA | Quality Assurance | |
| QBS | Quality Business System | |
| QASS | Quality Assurance Support Service | |
| QIP | Quality Improvement Plan | |
| QQI | Quality and Qualifications Ireland | |
| R&D | Research and Development | |
| SMT | Senior Management Team | |
| TEL | Technology Enhanced Learning | |
| TNA | Training Needs Analysis | |
| TSO | Training Standards Officer | |
| VTOS | Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme | |

Policy

Quality Assurance Policy

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1. Policy

This policy outlines the key principles that will ensure the consistent management of Donegal ETB's FET Service Quality Assurance (QA) system.

Purpose

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2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote and embed quality practices in all aspects of Donegal ETB's FET service by ensuring that policies and procedures are developed and revised in line with the following statutory legislation:

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Disability Act 2005
- Data Protection Act 2018

with attention to:

- QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- QQI Sector Specific Education and Training Boards
 Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

and informed by:

- The ongoing internal review of Donegal ETB's FET
 Service quality system
- The internal self-evaluation element of QQI's statutory core
 QA guidelines.

The Quality System enables Donegal ETB's FET Service to deliver its provision and education and training programmes to the highest standard, whilst conforming to national and international best



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practice guidelines, policies and procedures, and legal and statutory regulations.

This policy supports the development of a quality culture in which all staff assume responsibility for quality which is specific to their role.



Scope and Application

Quality Assurance Policy

3. Scope and Application

This policy encompasses both the corporate (governance, data protection, human resources, finance, health and safety, etc.), Teaching and Learning areas (teaching, assessment, learning environment, programmes, student support services etc.) and all other related activity that shape and support Donegal ETB's FET Service.



Definitions

4. Definitions

Donegal ETB's FET Service has adapted the following definitions in relation to the development of QA policies and procedures.

Policy: A policy is a clearly articulated, intended course of action or principle. Policies guide decision making.

Procedure: A procedure clearly describes the specific actions undertaken to implement a policy. It is the 'how to', whereas the policy is the 'what to'.

Guideline: Guidelines provide advice or guidance to individuals implementing the policies or procedures.

Internal Schedule: an internal schedule is an internal document which will provide, where necessary, direction on the process involved in implementing procedures.



Implementation

5. Implementation

Donegal ETB's Strategy Statement 2017-2021, Lean ar Aghaidh, identifies core values relating to work with "students/learners, staff and community". These core values form the basis for Donegal ETB's FET Service's Quality Assurance System, which strives to embed a quality culture through planning, implementation, review and continuous improvement. The key principles of Donegal ETB's FET Service Quality Assurance rests on the following five areas: plan, implement, publish, review, and improve.

This cyclical approach, essential to quality development and sustained success, is outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Stages of QA System





5.1 Plan:

Aligning quality assurance development to Donegal ETB's

Organisational Strategy. In reviewing existing policies and developing
new policies, the key themes in the strategy are:

- Teaching and Learning
- A progressive, accountable organisation
- Working with partners

and the priorities identified under each theme will inform the process.

'Quality Assurance and Enhancement' is a key theme in Donegal ETB's Strategic Plan. Goals associated with this theme are clearly aligned with Donegal ETB's mission and vision. Considerations for the ongoing review of the goals which may change the scope of Donegal ETB's current QA System include, for example, the development of an integrated QA system, which would broaden the scope of Donegal ETB's FET Service direction and provision. Such developments require a re-scope and changes to relevant QA policies and procedures.

5.2 Communication and Implementation:

Communication and Implementation of quality assurance through documented quality assurance policies and procedures and the processes to do this. The QA process will involve the development, recommendation, approval, communication and implementation of policies, procedures, guidelines and associated internal schedules



specific to key QA areas. The policies and procedures have been organised within eleven key areas, which have been informed by and aligned to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. Table 1 (below) presents the link between Donegal ETB's FET Service policies and procedures and the respective QQI Core Guidelines.

Process for Documenting Policies and Procedures

The following processes are observed when documenting policies and procedures.

- The identification of policies and procedures will be informed by QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards and QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines. The Core Guidelines list 11 main areas which need to be addressed in provider quality assurance procedures. The ETB sector specific guidelines require policies on Access, Transfer and Progression, Recognition of Prior Learning and Programme Design and Development. Thus, none of the areas identified in these documents work in isolation, and a mapping of crosscutting themes will ensure that all are included in overarching policies, procedures and processes.
- Donegal ETB's FET Service has agreed a structure and template for presenting policies and procedures. This will ensure that all policies are consistent, accessible and transparent (Appendix 1). This includes a reference section and links to all documents (legislation, statutory, guidelines, policy statements) that informed the policy development process.



- Consultation will underpin the development of each policy.
 An overview document (Appendix 2) will accompany each policy and provide a record of the consultation process specific to its development.
- Resources to support the operationalising of each policy (handbooks, toolkits, forms, templates, etc.) will be provided, as applicable, for staff, students and external stakeholders.
- Staff will be informed of new policies and procedures in line with Donegal ETB's FET Service Public Information and Communication Policy and Procedure. All communications will be disseminated via FET Senior Managers to relevant staff, who will disseminate the information to their specific programme areas.
- Guidance documents published by QQI and other relevant organisations and bodies have been utilised to ensure necessary compliance across the entire QA System. Such documents are referenced within each QA document, as relevant.



Table 1. Link between Donegal ETB's FET Service policies and the respective QQI Core Guidelines (see **Appendix 3** for the inclusion of relevant procedures and processes)

| QA Area | Donegal ETB's FET Service Policies | Date approved by Quality Council |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Governance and Management of Quality | Quality Assurance Policy | |
| Documented approach to Quality Assurance | Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents Policy | |
| Programmes of Education | Programmes Development and Approval Policy | |
| and Training | Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Recognition of Prior Learning Policy | |
| Staff Recruitment, Management and Development | Training and Development Policy | |
| 5. Teaching & Learning | Teaching and Learning Policy | |
| 6. Assessment of Learners | Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners Policy | |
| 7. Support for Learners | Approval and Management of Work Placements Policy Support for Learners Policy | |
| 8. Information and | Information Management Policy | |
| Data | Data Protection Policy | |
| Management | Management of Data Breaches Policy | |
| 9. Public Information & Communication | Public Information and Communication Policy | |



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| 10. Other parties | External Authentication Policy | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| involved in | other Parties involved in Education | |
| Education and | and Training Policy | |
| Training | and realized the second | |
| 11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review | Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes | |
| | and Quality Assurance System Policy | |
| | Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of | |
| | Programmes Policy | |

5.3 Publish:

Publication and dissemination of outcomes/findings. Approved QA policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations will be publicly available on Donegal ETB's website, in line with Donegal ETB's Public Information and Communication Policy. Furthermore, Donegal ETB is committed to publishing the outcomes of external review activities on the QA section of the Donegal ETB website (www.donegaletb.ie).

5.4 Monitoring and Review:

Ongoing monitoring and self-evaluation through a wide variety of methods, which encapsulate feedback from all relevant stakeholders. Donegal ETB is committed to ongoing monitoring and periodic evaluation across all of its activities. This is achieved through active engagement with key stakeholders and staff using a range of mechanisms, including:

Programme specific monitoring and review

- Continuous student and staff feedback
- Analysing student and programme data
- Ongoing assessment reviews (to ensure the currency of the content)



- Periodic self-evaluation
- External Authenticator Reports
- Actions arising from Boards and Committees
- Review of relevant targets and performance indicators (internal and external)

Other QA monitoring mechanisms

- In-built monitoring mechanisms within policies and procedures
- Annual QA reviews
- External Cyclical Reviews
- Other surveys
- improvement to the management and delivery of all aspects of the service. Donegal ETB recognised that a quality culture is dependent on a 'live' QA System as well as the commitment of all staff, students, and QA governance committees, to continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is the output of the QA monitoring and self-evaluation stage and is achieved through the effective implementation of mechanisms such as Quality Improvement Plans, Programme Improvement Plans and ongoing improvement and enhancement. Please see Appendix 4 for the process of policy and procedure development.



Responsibility

6. Responsibility

All staff have a responsibility for assuring quality within their roles and daily practice. Donegal ETB has developed a formal Quality Assurance Governance and Management structure, in line with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The QA Governance and Management structure incorporates the Quality Council, Quality Sub-Committee, Programme Sub-Committee and Certification Approval Board. The structure was designed to ensure a clear separation of responsibilities between the production and development of material, and its approval. The Governance and Management structure oversees the process of the quality cycle—plan, implement, publish, monitor and review, and improve.

A Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS) was created to support the separation of responsibilities outlined above, and to offer wideranging support to the FET staff and other stakeholders. The QASS collects and collates feedback from FET staff and other stakeholders regarding proposed policies and procedures; documentation is updated based on the feedback received and forwarded for review, recommendation and approval through the appropriate level of the QA Governance and Management structure. The QASS performs an essential role in the QA cycle, which is critical to the organised and structured evaluation process that underpins the new Quality Assurance system. Appendix 5 provides details of these committees



and an overview of their composition. Responsibilities of the committees are as follows:

- 6.1 The FET Senior Management Team (SMT) are responsible for ensuring that the Quality Policy is communicated, understood and implemented across the service.
- 6.2 The documented quality system is coordinated by the Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS).
- 6.3 The Quality Council has ultimate responsibility for ratification and approval of all quality assurance policies and procedures.

 General updates and minor amendments will be noted by the Quality Council, but not require approval by the Quality Council.
- 6.4 The Quality Assurance Sub-Committee is tasked to review the output of internal quality assurance reviews, as well as monitoring all aspects of the quality assurance system through the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).



Monitoring and Review

7. Monitoring and Review

Donegal ETB's FET Service will update this document in accordance with guidelines and directives issued by QQI and other awarding bodies and legislation.

| Responsibility | Frequency | Methods |
|----------------|--|--|
| QASS | Monitoring of the policy shall be carried out annually for the first year and every three years after that | Monitoring will be conducted with reference to data derived from quality monitoring, feedback from the various stakeholder groups and the outcomes of any complaint procedures |
| | | |
| | | |



Document Control

8. Document Control

| Version Number | Approval date | Description of revision | Originator | Approved by |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|
| | | Policy | | |
| | | | | |
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| Version Number | Approval date | Description of revision | Originator | Approved by |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|
| | | Procedure | | |
| | | | | |
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Appendices

Appendix 1

Template for Policies and Procedures

Policy Development Details

| Policy Name | Programme Development and Approval Policy |
|------------------------|---|
| QQI Core Guideline | |
| Policy applies to | □ Specific (outline organisational unit, etc.)□ FET Staff□ FET Students |
| Approved by | Donegal ETB FET Service Quality Council |
| Approval Date | |
| Effective Date | |
| Review Date | |
| Version | |
| Reference Documents | |



Abbreviations (if any)

- 1. Policy (overarching statement of policy)
- 2. Purpose
- 3. Scope/Application
- 4. Definitions
- 5. Policy Implementation
- 6. Responsibility
- 7. Procedures
- 8. Monitoring and Reviewing this policy
- 9. Document Control
- 10. Appendices (if any)
- 11. References and Links

| Ap | pen | dix | 2 |
|----|-----|-----|---|
| | | | |

Record of Consultation in Respect of Developing Policies and Procedures

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Policy Name:

Consultation process:

| Programme Teams / | Date circulated | Feedback |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Individuals | | Received |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Appendix 3

Table 1. Link between Donegal ETB's FET Service policies procedures and processes and the respective QQI Core Guidelines

| QA Area | Policies and Procedures | Date approved by Quality Council |
|--|---|---|
| 1.Governance and Management of Quality | Quality Assurance Policy | |
| 2.Documented approach to Quality Assurance | Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents Policy | |
| 3.Programmes of Education and Training | Programmes of Education and Training Policy 1. Programme Planning, Development and Approval Procedure 2. Development and Validation of Programmes Procedure 3. Updating Programmes and Course Material | |
| | Access, Transfer and Progression Policy | |
| 4.Staff | Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Recruitment Policy and Induction of Staff | |
| Recruitment, | Procedures and Processes. | |



| | | 34 |
|---------------------------|---|----|
| Management and | Professional Development of Staff Policy and | |
| Development | Procedures | |
| 5. Teaching & Learning | Teaching and Learning Policy | |
| 6. Assessment of Learners | Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners Policy | |
| | Management & Administration of the Assessment Process | |
| | Devising Assessment InstrumentsDevising Sample Answers / | |
| | Assessment Rubrics / Marking Schemes | |
| | Planning the Assessment Procedure | |
| | Coordinating the Assessment | |
| | Procedure | |
| | Notification of Assessment event | |
| | Preparing for the Assessment Event | |
| | Updating Assessments Instruments | |
| | 2. Conduct of Assessments Procedure | |
| | Conducting an Assessment Event | |
| | (Exam, Skills Demo) | |
| | Concluding an Assessment Event | |
| | (Exam, Skills Demo) | |
| | Non-attendance or Lateness | |
| | Marking of Assessment | |
| | Learner Assessment Rechecks and | |
| | Reviews | |



| | | 35 |
|----------------|--|----|
| | Learner Feedback | |
| | Malpractice | |
| | Plagiarism | |
| | Reasonable Accommodation | |
| | Extensions and deadlines | |
| | Compassionate consideration | |
| | Notification of provisional assessment | |
| | results | |
| | Repeats and re-submissions | |
| | | |
| | 3. Authentication of Assessment Procedure | |
| | and Approval of Results | |
| | Internal Verification of Assessment | |
| | External Authentication of Assessment | |
| | Approval of Assessment Results | |
| | Notification of Approved Assessment | |
| | Results | |
| | Appeals | |
| | Requesting Certification | |
| | | |
| | 4. Archiving of Assessments and Records | |
| | Procedure | |
| | Security of Assessment Documentation | |
| | Evidence and Record Retention | |
| | | |
| 7. Support for | Approval and Management of work placements | |
| Learners | Policy | |
| | Support for Learners Policy | |
| | | |



| | Protection of Enrolled Learners | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| | Procedure | |
| | 2. Student Complaints and Accolades | |
| | Procedure | |
| | 3. Student Voice Procedure | |
| | 4. Student Induction Procedure | |
| 8. Information and | Information Management Policy | |
| Data Management | Data Protection Policy | |
| 9. Public | Public Information and Communication Policy | |
| Information & | | |
| Communication | | |
| 10. Other parties | External Authentication Policy | |
| involved in | Other Parties involved in Education and | |
| Education and | Training Policy | |
| Training | Training Folicy | |
| 11. Self- | Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes and QA | |
| Evaluation, | System Policy | |
| Monitoring and | Review and Evaluation of Programmes | |
| Review | Policy | |



Appendix 4

Donegal ETB's FET Service Step-by-Step Process of Policy and Procedure Development

A rationale is presented to the **FET SMT by the QASS** to develop new or update existing Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures based on a specific need and in line with the OA Guidelines

A Draft Policy and Procedure is then produced by the QASS

Draft Policy and Procedures are reviewed by FET SMT

Draft Policy and Procedure is then issued for wider **consultation** with relevant stakeholders

After feedback, amendments and review of Policy and Procedures take place in preparation for operational use

The Draft Policy and procedure presented to relevant governance subcommittee(s)

Following recommendation by subcommittee, policy or procedure presented to **Quality Council** for **Approval**

Following approval from the Quality Council - presented to the **ETB Board** for **information**

Communication to staff

Implementation

Publish

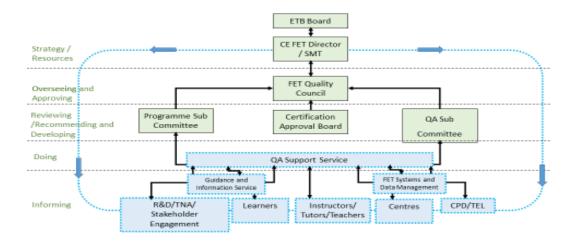
Ongoing monitor and review as part of self-evaluation procedures

Continuous improvement: a systematic approach to continuous improvement to the management and delivery of all aspects of the



Appendix 5

Quality Assurance Governance Structure



Donegal ETB has developed a QA Governance and Management structure which includes a Quality Council, a Programme Sub Committee, Quality Sub Committee and a Certification Approval Board.

The QA Support Service receives information and feedback from those groups that inform (e.g. Students, Educators, Adult Guidance Service), which supports the development of policies and procedures. Once these have been developed, it is the role of the Quality and Programme Sub Committees to review them and recommend presentation to the Quality Council. The Quality Council approves new policies and procedures for implementation. This is a deliberative structure with continuous feedback between each of the levels.



Quality Assurance Governance and Management Management, Boards and Committees

FET Senior Management Team

Chief Executive

Director of Further Education and Training

Adult Education Officers

Area Training Manager

Assistant Training Centre Managers



FET Quality Council

Terms of Reference

- 1. Oversee planning, co-ordination, quality, development and improvement of all aspects of the FET offering in the ETB.
- 2. Protects, maintains and develops the standards of education and training programmes and related activities.
- 3. Approves new/revised FET QA policies and procedures as recommended by the QA Panel.
- 4. Approves new programme developments as recommended by the Programme Approval Panel.
- 5. Receives reports on monitoring and review from the QA Panel.
- 6. Ratifies assessment results and final results as presented from the Results Approval Panel.
- 7. Ensures that all learners receive an equivalent experience.

| Role | Member |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Chair | FET Director |
| Secretary | Quality Assurance Coordinator |
| Member | Area Training Manager |
| Member | Adult Education Officer |
| Member | Staff Representative |
| Member | Employer Representative |
| Member | Community Representative |
| Member | Letterkenny Institute of Technology |
| Member | Further Education Support Services |
| Member | External Expert in FET |



FET Quality Assurance Sub-Committee

Terms of Reference

- The subcommittee reports into the FET Quality Council and assists it in fulfilling the development, oversight, planning, co-ordination and improvement of quality assurance policies, procedures, and processes.
- The QA subcommittee receives submissions of new or updated policies, procedures and processes from the QA Support service and will iteratively review such submissions until they are approved for submission to the FET Quality Council.
- On completion of the review, the QA subcommittee will make a recommendation to the FET Quality Council for approval of the revised QA policies, procedures or processes.
- The QA subcommittee will prepare a schedule for quality reviews and monitor outputs of the quality reviews, reporting relevant recommendations to the FET Quality Council.

| Role | Member |
|-----------|--|
| Chair | Adult Education Officer |
| Secretary | Quality Assurance Coordinator |
| Member | Training Standards Officer (FE) |
| Member | Assistant Training Standards Officer |
| Member | Full-time Programme - VTOS Coordinator |
| Member | Full-time Programme - VTOS Coordinator |
| Member | Full-time Programme - Youthreach Coordinator |



| Member | Senior Training Advisor/Authorised Officer |
|--------|---|
| Member | Contracted Training Officer |
| Member | Part-time Programme - BTEI Coordinator |
| Member | Part-time Programme - Basic Education Coordinator |
| Member | Course Recruitment Officer |
| Member | Guidance Service |



FET Programme Sub-Committee

Terms of Reference

- The programme subcommittee reports into the FET Quality Council and assists it in fulfilling the approval of new programmes.
- The programme subcommittee receives submissions from SMT and will iteratively review such submissions until they are approved for submission to the FET Quality Council.
- On completion of the approval process the Programme subcommittee
 will make a recommendation to the FET Quality Council to approve the new programme.
- The programme subcommittee will recommend programme validation documentation to the FET Quality Council for approval.
- 5. The Programme subcommittee receives submissions of new or updated policies, procedures and processes relating to programme design or approval from the QA Support Service. They will review such submissions until they are recommended to go forward for approval and ratification by the FET Quality Council.

| Role | Member |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| Chair | Assistant Training Centre Manager |
| Secretary | Quality Assurance Coordinator |
| Member | FET Programme Development Officer |



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| Member | Training Standards Officer (Training Services): |
|--------|---|
| | QASS |
| Member | Assistant Training Standards Officer (FE): QASS |
| Member | Management Information System: QASS |
| Member | Full-time Programme - PLC Coordinator |
| Member | Part-time Programme - BTEI Support Worker |
| Member | Community Education Facilitator |
| Member | Contracted Training Officer |
| Member | Guidance Service |



Certification Approval Board

Terms of Reference

The Certification Approval Board must ensure that all assessments submitted to the board are **comprehensively** and **thoroughly** reviewed. The role of the Certification Approval Board is to ensure that:

- 1. Results from all awarding bodies are fully quality assured and signed off by authorised personnel in the ETB's FET Service prior to submission for certification.
- Donegal ETB's FET Service assessment procedures are observed
- 3. The required and appropriate Assessment Evidence and Assessment Records are available.
- 4. Appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment, verification and authentication processes
- 5. External Authenticator reports and External Verifier/Examiner reports are comprehensively and thoroughly reviewed, and any actions are documented and referred to the relevant FET Training Standards Officer for appropriate corrective or improvement actions, if required. All actions are regularly reviewed as part of the Certification Approval Board's standard agenda.
- Assessment irregularities and issues are notified to the appropriate Senior Manager, noted within the Quality Assurance Governance structure, and recorded for resolution and continual improvement.
- 7. Any instances of non-conformance are identified and notified to the TSO, who will arrange for them to be logged as appropriate
- 8. Review any recheck outcomes which are unsatisfactory to the student.



9. Summary reports of the Certification Approval Board, which outline results from all awarding bodies and any issues and areas of good practice from External Authenticator/External Verifier reports that require further action, are presented to the FET Quality Council.

| Role | Member |
|-----------|---|
| Chair | Assistant Training Centre Manager |
| Secretary | Training Standards Officer (FE): QASS |
| Member | Training Standards Officer (Training Services): |
| | QASS |
| Member | Assistant Training Standards Officers X 2 (FE & |
| | Training Services): QASS |
| Member | Adult Education Officers X 2 |

References

10. Reference Documents

Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016)

Disability Act 2005

Data Protection Act 2018

Employment Equality Act 1998-2015

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

Sector Specific Education and Training Boards Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) QQI

Strategy Statement 2017-2021, Lean ar Aghaidh. Donegal ETB

