

**The Higher Education Authority and
Quality and Qualifications Ireland:
Engagement between the agencies
and the higher education
institutions in relation to
information provision**

Revised May 2019

Introduction

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) have re-affirmed their commitment to working closely together in the best interests of the Irish Higher Education system through the signing of a new [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) 2018-2020](#).

The agreement will see the two organisations collaborate in two key areas:

- Coherence of approach and alignment of activities;
- Enhancement projects.

These commitments will see actions in relation to a data strategy for higher education; a statutory database of programmes and awards; access, transfer and progression; enhancement of the Ireland's educational reputation on the international stage; collaboration with other HE partners and stakeholders; enhancement of the quality of teaching, learning and student experience; and supporting the quality and integrity of Irish research.

Both the HEA and QQI are committed to supporting the enhancement of the performance and quality of Irish higher education, while upholding the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy; and both are committed to the achievement of key objectives identified in the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020.

This MoU will act as a framework to renew efforts of both organisations in actively pursuing ways to collaborate meaningfully. Cooperation between the two organisations will support the collective advancement of the reform agenda for higher education in partnership with the sector.

This document first provides a brief comparison of the information requested as part of HEA Institutional Performance Compact and the QQI Annual Quality Reports and Periodic Institutional Review processes. Then it describes how each agency engages with higher education institutions from the agencies' perspectives. Finally, it sets out the statutory and other obligations of the two agencies and the higher education institutions in relation to information provision and reporting.

It is intended that this document should provide scope for further discussion and identification of areas of further potential progress.

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1. HEA QQI Memorandum of Understanding 2018-2020: Actions relating specifically to data and information provision

Cooperation between the two organisations in respect of the development by the HEA of a data strategy for higher education and of institutional profiles for HEIs, and by QQI of a statutory database of programmes and awards, will aim to coordinate and develop the organisations' respective data collection and analysis functions to minimise duplication of effort and to enhance the evidence base for the strategic oversight of the sector. Furthermore, new data-sources, such as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the national survey of employers, have potential to feed into quality assurance and enhancement processes undertaken within the sector.

1 (ii) The HEA will include QQI in the list of organisations with which data is shared under the terms and conditions for data-collection from higher education institutions.

1 (iii) Within the process of strategic dialogue and other interactions, the HEA will satisfy itself of the fulfilment by institutions of their quality assurance obligations, using the documented outcomes of statutory monitoring and quality review conducted by QQI in the form of annual dialogue and/or periodic review reports, and the Annual Institutional Quality Reports produced directly by HEIs.

1 (iv) Where available, QQI will utilise the data produced by the HEA to satisfy itself, within the process of annual dialogue and periodic review, of its institutional data requirements.

1 (v) The organisations will fully acquaint themselves with the reporting obligations of higher education institutions to both organisations and commit to reducing, with a view to eliminating, where possible, requests for the same or similar information. Both organisations will also look to each other in the first instance prior to making data requests to HEIs.

2 (iv) The organisations will work collaboratively with higher education institutions, including through the Forum, to establish how to effectively interpret and utilise outputs, including data, produced at an institutional and sectoral level in order to inform quality and quality enhancement activities.

2 (vii) QQI will be a partner with the HEA and SOLAS in the survey of employers.

2. HEA Performance Compact and QQI Annual Reports and Review: Comparison of information requested from HEIs

HEA - Mission-based Performance Compact	QQI – Annual Quality Reports and Institutional Review
<p>Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability</p>	<p>Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures (description of: overarching Institution Quality Policy, setting out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution; institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora) [<i>Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR), initial submission, updated on annual basis as needed</i>]</p>
<p>Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community.</p>	<p>Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures (covering the following areas: Programme Design and Approval; Programme Delivery and Assessment; Research Programme Quality; Student Lifecycle; Recruitment and Development of Teaching Staff; QA of Teaching and Learning; Learning Resources and Support; Information Management; Self-evaluation and Internal Monitoring; Involvement of External Stakeholders in QA; Engagement with Other Bodies; Provision and Use of Public Information; QA of Linked Providers for Designated Awarding Bodies; DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards for IoTs; Collaborative Provision) [<i>AIQR, initial submission, updated on annual basis as needed</i>]</p>
<p>Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an innovation Leader in Europe.</p>	<p>Internal Quality Review Schedule (internal quality reviews schedule or cycle at the level of module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty) and Reviews in the reporting period (including: Internal reviews; Profile of internal approval/evaluations and review; Profile of reviewers and chairs of internal approval/evaluations and reviews.) [<i>AIQR, annual submission</i>]</p>
<p>Significantly improve the equality of opportunity through education and training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population.</p>	<p>Institution-led Quality Assurance – Annual Information (including: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments and how they have supported strategic institution objectives; Significant specific changes to QA</p>

	within the institution; Schedule of QA governance meetings) [<i>AIQR, annual submission</i>]
Demonstrate consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence.	Other annual reporting: Use of data to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience; Evidence of the effectiveness and impact of QA policies and procedures, including an analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures); Quality Improvements and Enhancements; Objectives for the coming year, including Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans and Review Plans. [<i>AIQR, annual submission</i>]
Demonstrate consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) for Cyclical Review of HEI (including: description of the specific context of the institution, including the regulatory environment; information about the institution's collaborations; information pertaining to the comprehensive institution-wide nature of the review; description of the process for the development of the ISER; explanation of the institution's own internal quality assurance governance, policies and procedures.) [<i>Periodic, every 5-7 years</i>]

3. HEA processes for interacting with HEIs and data and information collected from HEIs

HEA Interactions with higher education institutions

This section sets out the process by which HEA interacts with institutions and details the frequency and nature of interactions.

It should be noted at the outset that the HEA regularly engages with the institutions in relation to the collection of ad-hoc data, to provide replies to parliamentary questions and emerging policy issues. These are not included in the summaries below.

The HEA engages with the institutions across its range of functions. Internally, the HEA is arranged into a number of sections, which include amongst others:

- System Funding, Capital and Performance Development (including Teacher Education)
- Finance and Governance
- Policy and Strategic Planning, which includes Policy Development, Research Policy, Internationalisation/European Programmes
- Statistics and Performance
- Skills and Enterprise Engagement
- The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education
- The Irish Research Council

Each of these sections interacts with institutions in relation to the collection of data. There are some other sections of the HEA which do not engage in data collection from the institutions (e.g. Communications, Personnel and Accounts).

System Funding, Capital and Performance Development Section

System Funding, Capital and Performance Development Section is responsible for the allocation of recurrent and capital funding to the institutions and the implementation and development of the Strategic Dialogue process with the institutions.

The section is responsible for the administration of the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM), a student numbers-based model used to allocate funding. It also engages with institutions on other grants paid to institutions and engages with institutions in relation to pensions. The section is responsible for engaging with the institutions in respect of capital developments.

The section's main formal interaction with the institutions is during the annual budget and accountability meetings held in spring of each year and the annual strategic dialogue meetings with institutions to discuss their compacts, held towards the end of the year. The section liaises with a wide range of institutional staff, including the President's Office and other senior management of the institutions including Finance Offices, Building Units, Pensions Units and Vice Presidents Academic (Registrars).

The section is also responsible for the implementation and development of the Strategic Dialogue process with the institutions. It is responsible for the development of performance compacts and reporting on system performance to the Minister for Education and Skills. The Section has responsibility to deliver on the recommendations of the National Strategy for Higher Education in relation to the development of technological universities, reform of initial teacher education provision etc. It is also responsible for the process of the allocation of performance funding to the institutions.

The section mainly liaises with the President's Offices and other senior management of the institutions.

Finance and Governance

Finance and Governance is responsible for ensuring that financial and governance frameworks are adhered to by institutions.

Finance and Governance is responsible for monitoring the governance returns of the institutions. Finance and Governance is also currently responsible for the collection of staffing data from the institutions, though it is anticipated that this function will transfer in the coming years as a staff database is implemented.

The section's main interaction is with Finance Offices, HR Offices and President's Offices in the institutions.

Policy and Strategic Planning

Policy and Strategic Planning spans a number of areas, including Policy Development, Research Policy, Internationalisation/European Programmes and Statistics:

Policy Development and Research Policy engage mainly on an ad-hoc basis with institutions in relation to emerging policy research policy issues (e.g. Transitions Reform, Horizon 2020, the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation etc.). The Policy section engages with a number of sectoral bodies, such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Irish Universities Association, Institutes of Technology Ireland, SOLAS, QQI etc. The Research Policy section engages with staff in the Research Offices and with the Research Vice-Presidents.

Internationalisation/European Programmes administers a wide variety of programmes with a global focus. These include acting as a national contact point/ coordinator for exchange programmes, such as Erasmus+ and Science without Borders, assisting in the implementation of scholarships, such as the Government of Ireland Scholarships, and administering international funding and collaboration programmes. This section liaises mainly with the institutions through their International Offices.

Statistics and Performance

The Statistics Unit of the HEA is responsible for the collection and dissemination of student and graduate data which is collected through the HEA's student records system (SRS). The section carries out analyses of this student data in order to inform policy on issues such as student retention, completion and graduate outcomes. It also engages with institutions on the Eurostudent Survey and other national and international statistical reports.

The section is also responsible for the evaluation of institutional and system performance, as required under the System Performance Framework.

The section generally engages with Academic Vice Presidents (Registrars), admissions and IT staff in the institutions.

Skills and Enterprise Engagement

The **Skills and Engagement Unit** co-ordinates and drives progress on collaboration between higher education and enterprise. The Unit manages the following;

- Springboard+ Programme
- Apprenticeship Provision in HE

- ICT Initiatives

Apprenticeship

In 2016 the Department of Education and Skills published an “Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020”. The action plan aims to establish work-based learning as a core contributor to Ireland’s growth as a society and economy. The Plan includes a target of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship places to be provided over the period 2016-2020 including a target of 9,000 apprenticeship both new and existing registrations by 2020.

SOLAS have the legislative responsibility for Apprenticeship provision in Ireland. The HEA works with SOLAS to determine the block allocation for craft apprenticeship provision (there are 27 craft apprenticeships) in the IoT sector for each academic year. The IOT’s are the main providers of the “off the job” training for apprentices. The HEA allocate the funding for this provision directly to the IoTs. SOLAS collect the registration data for craft apprentices. There were 5,058 apprentice registrations at December 2018.

Following on from the review of Apprenticeship Training in 2014, it was agreed that Apprenticeship provision should be expanded into other occupations and lead to a qualification nationally recognised on the NFQ from Level 5-10. Each apprenticeship is run by a Consortia which is comprised of a lead industry partner and a lead coordinating education provider. To date a total of 16 new apprenticeship programmes have commenced in the FE and HE sector. Out of this total 10 new apprenticeship programmes have commenced in the HE sector (six in the IoT sector, two in TU Dublin and two in the private sector). A further five consortia have confirmed that they will be commencing new apprenticeships in September 2019 with one starting in the university sector. In addition, c 20+ new apprenticeship programmes presently in development are expected to commence before the end of 2019.

The HEA allocate the funding to the consortia who are involved in the provision of new apprenticeship programmes in the HE sector. The HEA receives a monitoring report from each consortia twice a year which provides information on the operation of the programmes, numbers registered, any issues arising etc. The numbers registered are also returned in the HEA SRS data from each HEI involved in the provision. SOLAS collect the registration data for new apprentices. There were 590 new apprentice registrations at December 2018 in both HE and FE.

ICT Initiatives

The Skills and Engagement Unit also provide funding to the HE providers on an annual basis for ICT initiatives such as Additional Places for ICT Level 8 Courses, ICT Summer Camps for Second Level Students, ICT Retention Initiatives and Entrepreneurship Summer Camps for Second Level Students.

Springboard

Springboard+, which incorporates the ICT Skills Conversion Programme, was launched in 2011 by the then Minister for Education and Skills to tackle the high levels of unemployment at the time, offering free upskilling and reskilling opportunities to those who had lost their jobs in the recession. The programme has since evolved and now also offers the same opportunities to those in employment and those returning to the workforce after a period caring for their families. To date almost 50,000 people have availed of Springboard+ courses.

National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education

The **National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education** facilitates educational access and opportunity for groups who are under-represented in higher education. It manages a range of funding programmes, monitors and reports on progress in implementing the National Access Strategy and

achieving set targets and outcomes, provides advice on national policy and promotes the rationale for access to higher education in a way that wins widespread practical support from the education and political authorities and the public at large. The National Office engages mainly with staff in the Access Offices of the institutions.

Irish Research Council

The **Irish Research Council** primarily funds early stage career researchers: namely, postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers through a suite of programmes which partner with employers with particular attention to arts, humanities and social sciences research. The main aim of the IRC funding programmes is to provide up to four years of funding for PhD students where it can be shown that the student is getting a quality experience and is developing additional knowledge and competencies beyond the core research work. The IRC engages with staff in the Research Offices and with the Research Vice-Presidents.

Data obtained from HEIs

Method of collection, volume of data returned, when and how data is stored, how data is processed and used/ is data returned in a processed format to institutions, is data published

Annual budget and accountability meetings

Institutions are required under legislation to return financial budgets to the HEA (Section 37 Universities Act, Section 13 Institutes of Technology Act). The HEA holds formal budget and accountability meetings with each institution in spring of each year to discuss the proposed budgets.

Institutions must set out their financial outturns for the previous year, and budget projections for the coming year. It must set out anticipated state grants, fees and other income as well as estimates of pay and non-pay expenditure.

Method of collection: Annual submission to the HEA as part of the budgetary process

Volume of data returned: Medium volume of financial information.

How data is processed and used: Financial analysis takes place.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions: No, this is not relevant.

Is data published: No.

Financial data

The HEA collects financial data from the institutions, mainly in the form of budgets and outturns but also in relation to claim forms associated with specific payments due e.g. Free Fees and Nursing. Institutions are required to provide the HEA with copies of Financial Statements once audited and finalised. The HEA also collects information on pension payments and liabilities. All institutions are required to return a signed Financial Memorandum which sets out the formal relationship between the HEA and each higher education institution. The foundation of the relationship is provision of funding by the Authority to the institution, in accordance with relevant legislation and public policy and accountability for this funding within statutory and other agreed accountability frameworks.

Governance information

A governance framework is in place in the higher education institutions. Institutions must return a statement of governance and internal control to the HEA.

Institutional staffing data

The HEA gathers aggregate quarterly staff statistical information from the higher education institutions under its remit. These arrangements maintain information on the total number (WTE) of staff in higher education and they also provide high-level information on grade, salary level and gender.

The development of a *Staff Database* at the individual level has been a priority over recent years but has not been initiated due to resource constraints in the HEA. Implementation of a staff database will introduce consistent mechanisms for compiling and reporting data on personnel across the higher education system allowing for accurate and robust information on changes over time.

Method of collection: Spreadsheet return to the HEA quarterly from each HEI.

Volume of data returned: Quarterly aggregate statistics, low volume.

When and how data is stored: Stored electronically and in hard copy each quarter.

How data is processed and used: Limited data processing, as records are at aggregate level.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: No, data processing is not necessary in this instance.

Is data published?: Data is published in HEA Institutional Profiles annually and in HEA Key Facts and Figures annually.

Performance compacts

The current strategic dialogue process relates to the 2018-2021 period.

Under Cycle 1 of strategic dialogue (2018 - 2021), HEIs worked with the HEA to agree a “mission-based performance compact”, as part of a strategic system performance framework for the relationship between both parties. The compact sets out how each institution’s mission and goals align with national goals for higher education, providing the basis against which institutional performance will be measured and funding allocated. A projected statistical profile of the institutions for 2016/17 was provided by institutions as part of this Cycle.

Institutions set out performance objectives under six headings:

- Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability.
- Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community.
- Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation Leader in Europe.
- Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population.
- Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence.
- Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

This follows on from Cycles 1, 2, 3 and 4 of 2014 – 2016 where a performance compact was submitted and yearly self-evaluations and reflections were submitted by the institutions to the HEA up to 2017.

Method of collection: Annual submission to the HEA as part of the strategic dialogue process

Volume of data returned: High volume of complex quantitative and qualitative information. The first set of compacts included ~650 objectives with in excess of 2,000 separate KPIs.

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place, with internal HEA teams assigned to analyse submissions. External international expert panels are set up to evaluate submissions also.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Institutions are provided with sectoral analysis and spider diagrams illustrating relative performance

Is data published?: Compacts are published on HEA website.

Gender and Equality Staffing Reporting

Since 2015, on foot of the *Report of the Expert Group: HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Higher Education* (June 2016), the HEIs return staff statistics by gender on an annual basis. The HEA [Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender](#), presents gender-disaggregated data on the leadership, governance, management and staffing of the universities, affiliated colleges and the institutes of technology, along with 3-year-average data on the gender breakdown of professors, associate professors, senior lecturers and lecturers. The HEA is also working with HEIs to further enhance their reporting to include number of applications, recruitments and promotions for all academic grades and in response to the recommendations set out in the *Report of the Gender Equality Taskforce: Gender Action Plan 2018-2020* (published November 2018).

Student number (enrolment and graduate) data

The most developed and robust information available on higher education derives from the *Student Record System (SRS)*. This comprehensive database includes all learners in publicly-funded higher education institutions and an increasing number of private and independent institutions. The introduction of the SRS in 2006 enhanced the availability of timely, accurate and consistent statistics on higher education students enrolling and graduating from the 7 universities and the teacher training colleges. The inclusion of the institutes of technology in 2007 ensured accurate comparable data across the higher education institutions. The database holds information on all aspects of the student profile, student participation and graduate output.

Graduates are the key contribution that the higher education system makes to society and the economy. The SRS provides comprehensive information on graduates for example by region, discipline and level of qualification. The SRS holds detailed individual records of all higher education graduates from levels 6-10, in a way that facilitates comprehensive and detailed reporting on graduate output by field of study. In addition, equivalent detail in respect of entrants and enrolments in higher education allows for accurate estimation of near-future supply of skilled graduates.

Method of collection: Data upload to the HEA's SRS database twice annually (November and March).

Volume of data returned: High volume, over 250,000 March records and 200,000 November records

When and how data is stored: Data is stored on the HEA's SRS relational database

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place and contributes to major statistical reporting in the HEA, across its range of functions. Statistics are also provided to UOE, Eurostat and OECD (via the Department of Education and Skills).

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Institutions hold their own data, so this is not necessary. However, as part of data audit processes, summary data is returned to HEIs for verification purposes

Is data published?: Data is published in HEA Institutional Profiles annually, in HEA Key Facts and Figures annually and in the System Performance Report when published.

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

The central aim of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement is to develop a valuable source of information about students' experiences of higher education in Ireland. The main purpose of the survey is to provide benefits to each institution and its students by helping to improve feedback and appropriate action.

Website/Further Information: <http://studentsurvey.ie/>

Method of collection: Data upload to the ISSE system (not housed in the HEA). The HEA receives a copy of the records collected.

Volume of data returned: High volume, over 100,000 records annually.

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place and contributes to the production of the report of the survey results.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Data is cleaned and returned to the institutions for internal analysis.

Is data published?: Data is published in the report of the survey results.

Graduate Outcomes Survey

In 2018, the HEA introduced a new Graduate Outcomes Survey which tracks the progress of graduates nine months after graduation, and all HEA-funded HEIs are included in the survey. Each institution surveys their graduates across all NFQ levels and fields of study using a common survey instrument.

Website/Further Information: <http://hea.ie/statistics/information-for-institutions/graduate-outcomes-survey/>

Method of collection: Institutional return to HEA Graduate Outcomes Database

Volume of data returned: Medium volume, approx. 60,000 records annually

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place and contributes to the production of the report of the survey results

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Institutions hold their own data, so this is not necessary. However, as part of data audit processes, summary data is returned to HEIs for verification purposes

Is data published?: Data is published in the report of the survey results

Springboard Dataset

Information on Springboard+ participants is collected in two ways. Firstly, through the Springboard+ information management systems – Skills Direct and the Application Management System (AMS) and secondly, through surveys of Springboard+ participants once they have completed their course. The surveys provide information on the employment outcomes for Springboard+ graduate; while data from the information management systems provides evidence of the number of participants, course type and course providers. All of this data is examined yearly during the assessment process for the new funding call.

This data has been published at intervals with the most recent publication in Q1 2019.

Website/Further Information: <https://springboardcourses.ie/>

Other agencies

The HEA also engages in data-sharing arrangements with other state agencies.

The HEA and Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) have a memorandum of agreement in place which allows for the sharing of student record data. It is permitted under section 28 of the Student Support Act 2011 for the data controllers of bodies listed in Schedule 2 to the Act to process personal data for the relevant purposes of that Act. The purpose of the processing of data under this agreement is for the purpose of:

- obtaining information to determine whether an applicant is eligible for a grant,
- verifying data supplied as part of the application process,
- assisting in the processing of an application for a grant by a student and assisting in the payment of grants to students.

The HEA also engages with Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) in its Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey (AKTS) and receives the data submitted by the institutions to KTI in response to the survey.

4. QQI processes for interacting with higher education institutions and information collected from HEIs

This section sets out QQI processes for interacting with higher education institutions, through its Annual Institutional Quality Reports, Dialogue Meetings and Institutional Review.

Annual Institutional Quality Reports (AIQR)

Background

As the external quality assurance body for higher education in Ireland, each year QQI requests nine Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) – universities, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) – and the thirteen Institutes of Technology (IoTs) to complete an Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report (AIQR) based on the preceding academic year. As they are established, technological universities will also submit AIQRs. AIQRs are integrated into a broader framework of engagement between QQI and institutions regarding quality assurance. This broader framework is comprised of: QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines; the Quality Assurance procedures of the institutions themselves; the National Framework of Qualifications; dialogue meetings between QQI and individual HEIs; and periodic external peer review by QQI.

Each HEI, as listed above, submits an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) to QQI. The institutions are provided with a template report by QQI, which they are expected to complete and return. There are slight variances between the AIQR completed by the designated awarding bodies and the AIQR completed by the Institutes of Technologies, due to their differing statutory footing.

Data Requested

The AIQRs gather data from HEIs in two parts. Part 1 of the AIQR consists of an overview of institutional quality assurance governance, policies, procedures and schedules and does not change much from year to year. Part 1 requests information under the following headings:

Overarching institution-level approach and policy for QA

- Overarching Institution Quality Policy
- Quality assurance decision-making fora

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

- Programme Design and Approval
- Programme Delivery and Assessment
- Research Quality
- Student Lifecycle
- Teaching Staff
- Resources and Support
- Information Management
- Self-evaluation and Monitoring
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Engagement with Other Bodies
- Provision and Use of Public Information
- Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies)
- DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)

- Collaborative Provision
- Internal Quality Review Schedule

The AIQR is also used to capture quality assurance activities within the reporting year. Thus, Parts 2-6 provide an overview of quality assurance activities, themes, changes, enhancements and impacts for the reporting year. Part 2-6 requests information under the following headings:

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

- Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments
- Reviews in the reporting period
 - Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.
 - Profile of internal approval/evaluations and review completed in the reporting period.
 - Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year
 - Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year
 - Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year
 - Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year
 - Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year
 - Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year
 - Profile of reviewers and chairs internal approval/evaluations and review for reviews completed in the reporting period.
- Other Implementation Factors
 - A description of how data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.
 - Factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period.
 - A description of other implementation issues.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

- Evidence of the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.
- Evidence of the impact of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.
- Analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

- Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period
- Quality Enhancement Highlights

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

- Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans
- Review Plans
- Other Plans

Part 6: Periodic Review (optional)

- The Institution and External Review

- Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance
- Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.

Timeframe

The AIQRs are submitted to QQI by the institution in February each year. A call is sent out to HEIs in November of the preceding year. The reports cover the period September 1st to August 31st of the preceding year.

Publication

QQI currently publishes all AIQRs on its website. A summary report, *Quality Within Higher Education*, is published each year and highlights best practice as evidence in the annual reports. The AIQRs and summary reports can be accessed [here](#).

Dialogue Meetings with institutions

Background

QQI holds Dialogue Meeting (DM) with all publicly funded HEIs (except for the NUI). The meetings are designed to consider the AIQR and discuss any aspect regarding follow-up on the AIQR, provide an overview of strategic and internal and external factors impacting on institutional quality assurance and any issues the institution would like to discuss. DMs are structured meetings between senior staff representatives of QQI and senior staff of a HEI. Up to 2018, Dialogue Meetings took place on an annual basis). AIQRs were submitted in Q1 and DMs took place to follow up on these in Q2.

Data Requested

The AIQRs form the basis for DMs and additional data is requested only in exceptional circumstances.

Timeframe

DMs will take place between April and June each year from 2016. In 2018 it was agreed in discussions with the HEIs that with the advent of the CINNTE Review Cycle, DMs would move to a biennial basis, with AIQRs continuing on an annual basis.

Publication

DM meeting notes are agreed between QQI and the institution. These meeting notes are not published.

Storage of Data

The DM meeting notes are stored on the QQI server.

Institutional Review

Background

The following extract from the QQI “[Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions](#)” sets out the scope of institutional review.

Institutional review evaluates the effectiveness of the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services the institution provides. The scope of reviews in the area of research is in relation to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the institution for research in general, including research programmes and research activities.

Review measures institution accountability for compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures as established in the lifecycle of engagement between the institution and QQI.

Review explores institution enhancement of quality in relation to impacts on teaching, learning and research, institutional achievements and innovations in quality assurance, alignment to the institution’s mission and strategy and the quality-related performance of the institution relative to quality indicators and benchmarks identified by the institution.

QQI review functions are set out in various sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (referred to henceforth as the 2012 Act). This policy relates to sections 34 and 35 of the Act. The QQI Policy on Monitoring states that QQI monitoring may initiate a separate statutory (focused) review which may ultimately lead to withdrawal of approval of QA procedures. Accordingly, this outcome is excluded from this policy. Approval of QA is not relevant in the case of a Previously Established University.

The policy also encompasses, as appropriate, other statutory reviews of the Authority, including the mandatory, cyclical review of delegation of authority to make awards, outlined in Section 54 of the 2012 Act and review of implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression outlined in section 57. It also incorporates, where reasonable and subject to timing, reviews of compliance with the code of practice for the International Education Mark (Section 63 of the 2012 Act).

Data Requested

As part of the review process – and as laid out in the Cyclical Review Handbooks (for [Universities & other DABs](#) and [IoTs](#) respectively) – HEIs must submit an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER). A set template for the ISER is not proposed by QQI. It is the responsibility of each institution to determine the most appropriate format for its own Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, taking into account its particular profile and context and the Terms of Reference for the review. However, it is suggested that the ISER contain the following elements:

- The specific context of the institution, including the regulatory environment;
- Information about the institution’s collaborations;
- Information pertaining to the comprehensive institution-wide nature of the review;

- A very brief description of the process for the development of the ISER; and
- A clear and simple explanation of the institution's own internal quality assurance governance, policies and procedures.

The sources of evidence and practice which will underpin the self-evaluation may include:

- Quality assurance activities and enhancements undertaken by the institution. These may include ongoing quality assurance activities such as undergraduate and postgraduate programme approval and reviews, research, collaborations and partnerships, national enhancement initiatives, regional initiatives and institution-led initiatives; and
- Evidence about quality assurance and enhancement from a range of informational source such as:
 - case studies of specific initiatives or events
 - student surveys, staff surveys, graduate surveys and external stakeholder surveys
 - data and metrics such as enrolment profiles, completion rates, graduate destination
 - information, research outcomes, participation information and staffing numbers
 - information accumulated over the course of several AIQRs

The inclusion of evidence should also incorporate an analysis of what these sources of information are telling the institution about quality and how well the use of this information is managed by the institution;

- The perspective of key stakeholders about quality assurance and quality enhancement;
- Comparisons with institution-identified benchmarks for measuring the effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement; and
- Previously prepared AIQRs.

Conclusions may include:

- The performance of the Institution with respect to the objectives set out in the Terms of Reference;
- The overall and specific effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement in the Institution; and
- A series of planned actions, based on the findings, culminating in an improvement plan.

HEA Data

A representative of HEA also briefs Review Teams on HEA data, their Compact with the institution and the performance of the institution relative to this. As set out in the agreement with QQI, there may be occasions when the HEA may wish to bring particular issues, based on evidence, to the attention of the review team. HEA institutional profiling data and ISSE data is also be provided to the Team.

Timeframe

QQI carries out an institutional review of each publicly funded HEI every 5-7 years. The current cycle is the CINNTE cycle and runs from 2018 to 2023. The current institutional review schedule can be accessed [here](#). The ISER is submitted 12 weeks ahead of the Review Team's Visit to the institution.

Publication

The publication of the ISER is a voluntary decision on behalf of the institution. It is standard practice for an ISER to be disseminated to staff and learners within the institution and to key external stakeholders. The Institution is required to submit the ISER (electronically) to QQI on the agreed date set out in the Terms of Reference. Upon receipt, the ISER will be distributed to the Review Team members. The ISER and the information contained therein will remain confidential between the Institution, QQI and the Review Team members and will not be shared with third parties. The institution is also welcome to make the ISER and appendices available through a password protected extranet facility for the review.

5. Statutory and Other Obligations

This section sets out the statutory and other obligations of QQI, the HEA and the higher education institutions in relation to data and information provision.

The HEA's statutory obligations regarding data and information, data analysis, and the provision of information by higher education institutions to the HEA

The following items relating to data are set out in the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971:

Main functions of the HEA	
Section 3	An tÚdarás [the HEA] shall, in addition to the specific functions given to it by this Act, have the general functions of— <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) furthering the development of higher education,(b) assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment,(c) promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research,(d) promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education,(e) promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education.

Supply of data and information	
Section 11	An institution of higher education shall supply to An tÚdarás [the HEA] all such information relative to the institution as An tÚdarás may require for the purpose of performing its functions.

Analysis of data and information	
Section 7	An tÚdarás may, annually or at such other intervals as it may determine, require any institution of higher education to submit a statement of its financial position to An tÚdarás and it shall be the duty of every institution of higher education to comply with any requirements which are imposed on it under this section.
Section 13	An tÚdarás may institute and conduct studies on such problems of higher education and research as it considers appropriate and may publish reports of such studies.

The HEA's other obligations and role regarding information provision

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 sets out further the mandate of the HEA, which encompasses the responsibility to create a well-coordinated system of higher education institutions, each with a clear mission, which is capable in its totality of delivering on national objectives set for the system by the Minister for Education and Skills.

This role requires that the HEA:

- Adopt a focus on outputs and performance of each HEI, and the system as a whole.
- Negotiate a compact with each HEI and agree regional cluster outcomes.
- Monitor performance against agreed deliverables, and
- Provide funding based on performance.

Strategic dialogue is the key means through which this role is being exercised. Through it, the HEA engages with the institutions to ensure that institutional mission and strategy is aligned with national strategy and that national goals are being delivered by the sector as a whole. In the case of each compact, this sets out how the HEI (and cluster) is to contribute to national objectives (determined by the Minister with HEA advice). The outcomes agreed will be subject to annual assessment and funding in part determined by performance.

In addition to the overarching nature of strategic dialogue and compacts, the HEA has in place other accountability arrangements.

- A governance framework for the HEIs, agreed with the HEA and reflecting current best practice in the public sector is in place. Institutions must report to the HEA annually on compliance with the governance framework.
- HEIs are required to supply the HEA with reliable and prompt reports on how their resources have been spent, as well as other statistical returns related to performance and outputs.
- Financial reports are provided once a year, but with the provision for more frequent reporting, if an institution is thought to be facing financial problems.

QQI's statutory obligations regarding data and information, data procedures, and the provision of information by higher education institutions to QQI

The following items relating to data are set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012:

Main functions of QQI	
Section 9	<p>(a) promote, maintain, further develop and implement the Framework,</p> <p>(b) advise the Minister in relation to national policy on quality assurance and enhancement in education and training,</p> <p>(c) review and monitor the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures,</p> <p>(d) validate programmes of education and training, and review and monitor the validated programmes,</p> <p>(e) establish the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by the Authority or by a provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated,</p> <p>(f) make awards, delegate authority to make an award where it considers it appropriate and review and monitor the operation of the authority so delegated,</p> <p>(g) determine policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners, and monitor the implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners by providers,</p> <p>(h) establish a code of practice for the provision of programmes of education and training to international learners,</p> <p>(i) authorise the use of the international education mark by a provider that complies with the code of practice,</p> <p>(j) establish, maintain and develop a database providing information on awards recognised within the Framework, programmes of education and training which lead to awards recognised within the Framework and any other programmes the Authority thinks appropriate,</p> <p>(k) establish and maintain the register,</p> <p>(l) advise and consult with the Minister, or any other Minister, on any matter which relates to its functions, at that Minister's request,</p> <p>(m) co-operate with international bodies on qualifications and quality assurance policies and their implementation and in particular to—</p> <p>(i) liaise with awarding bodies outside the State for the purposes of facilitating the recognition in the State of awards of those bodies, and</p> <p>(ii) facilitate the recognition outside the State of awards made in the State,</p> <p>(n) ensure arrangements for the protection of learners are in place where learners have begun but not completed a programme of education and training where a provider ceases to provide the programme before completion,</p> <p>(o) assist enrolled learners in finding alternative programmes of education and training where providers cease to provide a programme before completion, and</p> <p>(p) collect any information relating to the performance of its functions it considers appropriate.</p>

Co-operation with QQI

Section 13(3)	Upon being requested to do so by the Authority, a relevant provider, a body authorised to make awards in the State or a professional recognition body shall provide any information the Authority requires for the performance of its functions in so far as those functions relate to the functions of the provider, the body authorised by law to make awards in the State or the professional recognition body as the case may be, including information in respect of completion rates, within the time specified in the request.
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Obligation of providers to prepare quality assurance procedures

Section 28(4)(c)	A provider's QA procedures shall include procedures for the preparation of a report which sets out: (i) the results of a review by the provider of the application of its quality assurance procedures and (ii) what measures (if any) the provider considers necessary arising out of the review to establish, ascertain, maintain and improve the quality of education, training, research and related services provider by the provider and submit this to QQI
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Quality assurance procedures and previously established universities

Section 29(b)	A provider's QA procedures shall include procedures for the preparation of a report which sets out: (i) the results of a review by the provider of the application of its quality assurance procedures and (ii) what measures (if any) the provider considers necessary arising out of the review to establish, ascertain, maintain and improve the quality of education, training, research and related services provider by the provider and submit this to QQI
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Quality Assurance Procedures and relevant providers, other than previously established universities

Section 30(1)	Providers submit draft QA procedures to QQI for approval
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Procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners

Section 56()	Before establishing procedures for ATP, each relevant provider (except for previously established universities), and each linked provider shall submit draft procedures for ATP to QQI.
Section 56(11)	A previously established university shall provide a copy of its QA procedures to QQI

Directions of QQI following review of procedures for QA

Section 35 (3)	Where a direction is issued to a provider after a review of the effectiveness of their QA procedures under Section 34, a provider shall provide QQI with information when requested to do so by QQI regarding compliance by the provider with the direction issued to the provider.
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Directions of QQI following review of procedures for access, transfer and progression and the IEM

Section 58(4)	Where a direction is issued to a provider after a review of the implementation of the procedures for access, transfer and progression under Section 57, a provider shall provide QQI with information when requested to do so by QQI regarding compliance by the provider with the direction issued to the provider.
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Register of Providers

Section 78	<p>QQI shall establish and maintain a Register of Providers. QQI shall enter information in the register regarding providers authorised to use the International Education Mark and that has PEL arrangements in place.</p> <p>(Providers name, address, contact details, whether provider is authorised to use IEM, PEL arrangements in place name of programme, details of arrangements in place)</p>
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Database of Programmes

Section 79	<p>QQI shall establish and maintain a database providing information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awards recognised within the NFQ; • programmes which lead to awards recognised within the NFQ; • any other programmes QQI thinks appropriate. <p><i>Database shall include the following award information:</i> Name of award; awarding body/bodies that makes award; NFQ level; award type.</p> <p><i>Database shall include the following programme information:</i> Name of the provider; programme title; programme duration; award programme leads to; awarding body/bodies; whether award is recognised on NFQ; NFQ level; award type, who reviews QA procedures for provider; whether provider is authorised to use IEM.</p>
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Universities' statutory obligations regarding data and information provision

The following items relating to data are set out in the Universities Act, 1997:

Strategic Plans	
Section 34	(3): As soon as practicable after it approves the strategic development plan under subsection (2), the governing authority shall provide a copy of the plan to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.

Quality Assurance Procedures	
Section 35	<p>(1): A governing authority, in consultation with the academic council, shall, as soon as practicable after the governing authority is established under this Act and at such other times as it thinks fit, require the chief officer to establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university.</p> <p>(2) The procedures shall include—</p> <p>(a) the evaluation, at regular intervals and in any case not less than once in every 10 years or such longer period as may be determined by the university in agreement with An tÚdarás [the HEA], of each department and, where appropriate, faculty of the university and any service provided by the university, by employees of the university in the first instance and by persons, other than employees, who are competent to make national and international comparisons on the quality of teaching and research and the provision of other services at university level, and</p> <p>(b) assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university,</p> <p>and shall provide for the publication in such form and manner as the governing authority thinks fit of findings arising out of the application of those procedures.</p>

Budgets and Accounts	
Section 37	(1): A governing authority shall, on or before the 1st day of March in each financial year or such other date as An tÚdarás [the HEA] may approve (which may be a date before the commencement of the financial year to which the statement relates), prepare and submit to An tÚdarás, in such form and manner as may from time to time be approved by An tÚdarás, a statement of the proposed expenditure and expected income of the university for the financial year.
Section 39	<p>(1): A university shall keep, in such form as may be approved by An tÚdarás [the HEA], all proper and usual accounts and records of all income received or expenditure incurred by it.</p> <p>(2): Accounts kept in pursuance of subsection (1) shall, to the extent directed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, be submitted annually by a university to the Comptroller and Auditor General, for audit, by such date as the Comptroller and Auditor General may from time to time determine and, immediately after the audit, a copy of the accounts, together with a copy of the report of the</p>

	Comptroller and Auditor General on the accounts, shall be presented by the university to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.
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Staffing	
Section 51	A university shall provide An tÚdarás [the HEA] with such information as An tÚdarás may from time to time request relating to the number of employees employed by the university, their composition by grade, their terms and conditions of employment (including their remuneration, fees, allowances, expenses and superannuation) and any other related matters.

Application of HEA Act	
Section 49	<p>An tÚdarás [the HEA], in furtherance of its general functions under section 3 of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 , shall assist the universities in achieving the objectives of Chapters IV [Staff] , VII and VIII [Planning and Evaluation] of Part III [Finance, Property and Reporting] and may review—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic development plans prepared in accordance with section 34 [Strategic Development Plan], • the procedures established in accordance with section 35 [Quality Assurance], • the policies set out in the statement provided for in section 36 [Equality Policy] and their implementation, and • the matters referred to in section 50 [Guidelines], having regard to any guidelines issued in accordance with that section and information provided in accordance with section 51 [Information on Staffing], <p>and may, following consultation with the universities, publish a report, in such form and manner as it thinks fit, on the outcome of any such review.</p>

Institutes of technology statutory obligations regarding information provision

The following items relating to data are set out in the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006:

Strategic Plans	
Section 22	(3): As soon as practicable after it approves the strategic development plan under subsection (2), the governing body shall provide a copy of the plan to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.

Budgets and Accounts	
Section 13	(1): A governing body shall, on or before the first day of March in each financial year or such other date as An tÚdarás [the HEA] may approve (which may be a date before the commencement of the financial year to which the statement relates), prepare and submit to An tÚdarás, in such form and manner as may from time to time be approved by An tÚdarás, a statement of the proposed expenditure and expected income of the college for the financial year.
Section 18	(1): A college shall keep, in such form as may be approved by An tÚdarás [the HEA], all proper and usual accounts and records of all income received or expenditure incurred by it. (2): Accounts kept in pursuance of subsection (1) shall, to the extent directed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, be submitted annually by a college to the Comptroller and Auditor General, for audit, by such date as the Comptroller and Auditor General may from time to time determine, and, immediately after the audit, a copy of the accounts, together with a copy of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the accounts, shall be presented by the college to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.

Staffing	
Section 16	(3): A college shall supply to An tÚdarás [the HEA] such information as An tÚdarás may from time to time request relating to the number of persons employed by the college, their composition by grade, their terms and conditions of employment (including their remuneration, fees, allowances, expenses and superannuation) and any other related matters.”.

Application of HEA Act	
Section 47	An tÚdarás [the HEA] may review— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the strategic development plan prepared in accordance with section 21C, and (b) the policies set out in the statement prepared under section 21D and their implementation by the Institute, and may, following consultation with the Institute, publish a report, in such form and manner as it thinks fit, on the outcome of any such review.”

Institutions' other obligations regarding data and information provision

The higher education institutions also comply with a Code of Governance. A Code of Governance has been agreed between the HEA and the two respective sectors (universities/colleges and institutes of technology). Institutions submit an annual statement of governance and internal control to the HEA, in the following format:

“The following information should be included in an annual governance statement signed by the Chief Officer and Chairperson and submitted to the HEA:

1. A statement affirming that the governing authority is responsible for and is satisfied that the university is in compliance with all statutory obligations applicable to the university that may be set out in legislation governing the establishment of the university or in other relevant legislation;
2. A statement confirming that a code of Governance and a Code of Conduct for Members and Employees have been adopted;
3. Financially significant developments affecting the university in the past year, including the establishment of subsidiaries or joint ventures and acquisitions, and major issues likely to arise in the short to medium term;
4. A statement affirming that Government policy on pay is being complied with;
5. A statement affirming that all appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, procurement and asset disposals are being carried out;
6. Confirmation that the Guidelines for the Appraisal and Management of Capital Proposals are being adhered to where appropriate;
7. Certification that Government travel policy requirements are being implemented in all respects;
8. Confirmation that the Guidelines on Achieving Value for Money in Public Expenditure as set out in the address by the Minister for Finance of 20 October 2005 and communicated to the universities are being followed;
9. A statement affirming the university's compliance with tax laws;
10. Confirmation that a child protection policy is in place;
11. Confirmation that fees and/or expenses paid to members of governing authority are in accordance with the guidelines from the Department of Finance and are presented in the University's Annual Report. A note on the schedule of fees and aggregate expenses payable to external governing authority members should be included;
12. Confirmation that a code of governance is in place in respect of trading subsidiaries (i.e. subsidiaries with annual turnover and employees), with annual statements