Introduction

Mayo Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) was established through the implementation of the Education and Training Boards Act of 1 July 2013. As a result of the implementation of the Act, VECs in Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim and, since July 2014, the services previously provided by FÁS/SOLAS in the region, were amalgamated into the single established entity MSLETB.

MSLETB is committed to the provision of an effective Quality Assurance (QA) system for all stakeholders. This commitment is reflected in MSLETB's overarching FET Strategy and particularly in Strategic Goal 3 - *Quality Provision*. MSLETB recognises the importance of providing quality assured further education and training services to prospective and current learners, staff and other stakeholders. MSLETB also recognise the importance of obtaining and acting upon feedback from all learners, staff and key stakeholders to continuously improve programme quality.

MSLETB FET Strategic Goal 3 - *Quality Provision. MSLETB FET will provide high quality education and training programmes and will meet the appropriate national and international quality standards.*

Policy

This policy statement will provide overarching principles and guidelines that facilitate the implementation of a QA framework that meets MSLETB's strategic aspirations and the needs of its learners, staff and stakeholders, including awarding bodies.

Building on existing good practice, MSLETB will operate a Quality Assurance policy framework that complies with, and has 'regard to', published Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI) QA Guidelines as determined by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012.

While the QQI published Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines provide the majority of the quality assurance guidance required, statutory sector-specific guidelines add to the core guidelines by addressing specific responsibilities of the ETBs as set out in the 2012 Act.

MSLETB is responsible for the design, development, approval, monitoring and review of all programmes including programmes leading to QQI Awards.

MSLETB QA procedures will cover all further education and training services, both leading to QQI awards and uncredited programmes.

Principles

The QA Policy in MSLETB will be informed by overarching principles that underpin the approach to QA for the delivery of its Education and Training Services

1. MSLETB is responsible for the quality of all of its education and training provision and its assurance.
2. Context: QA in MSLETB operates across a broad spectrum of Education and Training provision including Youth Services, Adult and Further Education, Apprenticeships and Traineeships. MSLETB will demonstrate its quality publicly across all of its activities.
3. A QA 'culture' will be fostered throughout the MSLETB FET landscape in order to instil both individual and organisational commitment in recognising that QA is a tool that drives continuous improvement.
4. Education and training exists principally for the purpose of enabling people to learn and, accordingly, MSLETB programmes of education and training will be designed, implemented and evaluated with learning outcomes in mind.
5. Approved QA procedures and those procedures which must have regard to QQI guidelines will be implemented by MSLETB and will be monitored for effectiveness.
6. MSLETB QA systems will make appropriate use of external persons, who are independent of MSLETB and its agents and who are expertly qualified, to make relevant national and international comparisons.
7. Continuous improvement is the goal of the MSLETB quality assurance process.
8. MSLETB's quality assurance systems will enhance transparency. Processes will be developed through which MSLETB can demonstrate its accountability, including accountability for the investment of public and private money.
9. The MSLETB QA system will support public confidence in its capacity to provide programmes to agreed standards. MSLETB will actively promote its QA system and proactively develop it as a tangible resource and an explicit part of the education and training infrastructure. MSLETB views public confidence as a key objective of its QA system and will publish QA outputs where feasible.

Guidelines

The Core Quality Assurance Guidelines established by QQI for provider's guidelines are statutory guidelines; the 2012 Act further requires providers to have 'regard to' QQI's quality assurance (QA) guidelines when establishing their own quality assurance procedures.

1. Governance and Management of Quality

MSLETB will develop a system to oversee education, training and related activity to ensure its quality. This governance structure will separate responsibilities between those who produce/develop material and those who approve it. Included in the governance structure are groups or units which make decisions and approve them.

2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

MSLETB's QA system is fully documented and sets out MSLETB's commitment to quality in terms of programme provision and related activities as appropriate. It also refers to arrangements for the internal evaluation or review and continuous improvement of the effectiveness of policies and procedures. Policies and procedures are effective and fit for purpose. All quality assurance procedures are regularly self-monitored to ensure ongoing effectiveness and procedures found to be ineffective are amended or replaced.

3. Programmes of Education and Training

The development of new programmes is conducted systematically. Sufficient time is allowed for the necessary internal and external consultations with stakeholders to be undertaken. This includes an evaluation of new programmes by the appropriate internal decision-making structures, allowing for consideration of new programmes by both management and governance.

4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

MSLETB takes responsibility for the quality of its staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. MSLETB assures itself as to the competence of its staff. There is a systematic approach to the fair and transparent recruitment and further professional development of staff engaged in programme and service delivery. Mechanisms are provided for staff communications and feedback and opportunities for continuous professional development are publicised to all staff.

5. Teaching and Learning

MSLETB is committed to self-monitoring and improving the quality of the teaching and learning on its education and training programmes and maintains an ethos that promotes learning.

6. Assessment of Learners

MSLETB provides an assessment framework that establishes a philosophy on, and approach to, the assessment of learners in both formal assessments (where it leads to certification) and in-house assessment. It also addresses the administration of assessment by MSLETB. Guidelines for assessments are issued to all learners.

7. Supports for Learners

The adequacy of the resources available to learners is monitored on an ongoing basis. Learning resources are updated and expanded as necessary to reflect up-to-date approaches and learner needs as identified through feedback on teaching and learning.

8. Information and Data Management

Reliable information and data are available for informed decision-making and to ensure that MSLETB knows what is working well and what needs attention. Controls and structures are in place to generate named data/reports which are communicated to staff and management for self-monitoring and planning purposes. The information gathered reflects the context and mission of MSLETB.

9. Public Information and Communication

MSLETB will publish information about its education & training and related services including MSLETB quality assurance policies & procedures and learner information.

10.   Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

MSLETB QA procedures will encompass all further education and training services regardless of whether or not these lead to QQI Awards. MSLETB QA procedures include provision for engagement with external partnerships and second providers such as contracted trainers and collaborating providers. The QA system will include explicit criteria and procedures for the recruitment and engagement of external, independent, national and international experts.

11.   Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Review and self-evaluation of quality, including review of programmes of education, training and related services, is a fundamental part of the MSLETB quality assurance system. The purpose of such self-evaluation is to review, evaluate and report on MSLETB education and training services, quality assurance systems, and procedures which underpin these. In doing so, existing effective practices are identified and maintained, while areas needing improvement are addressed.

Continuous Development

MSLETB will not simply issue guidelines and then consider them completed (notwithstanding the fact that guidelines, as issued are in full effect until replacement guidelines are issued). Guidelines will be continuously redeveloped and updated in order to keep up with changes in the education and training landscape. The guidelines will change as public policy changes, as providers innovate and as QQI's priorities change. Part of QQI's role as an external QA agency in this sense is to assess the effectiveness of the guidelines and to organise their on-going development in collaboration and consultation with the sectors.

Review of This Policy

This policy and MSLETB's principles and guidelines and development of a QA system will be reviewed two years after the publication of this policy, or earlier if necessary.