

1.1 To whom do these guidelines apply?

These guidelines are applicable to all types of providers providing blended learning programmes leading to awards recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). They are produced for the attention of, and use by, providers establishing quality assurance procedures under the 2012 Act. The legal context varies between providers as follows:

- Previously established universities and the National University of Ireland (NUI) are recognised as autonomous and must have regard to QA guidelines in the development of their internal QA procedures.
- Other awarding bodies, namely the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and institutes of technology, must have regard to the QA guidelines prior to the approval of their QA procedures by QQI.

- Education and Training Boards, SOLAS and Teagasc must have regard to the QA guidelines prior to the approval of their QA procedures by QQI.
- Independent or private providers of higher, further and English language education providing blended learning programmes come voluntarily to QQI to seek approval of their QA procedures or access to QQI awards. Such providers must have regard to the QA guidelines prior to the approval of their QA procedures by QQI.
- Linked providers must have regard to these QA guidelines prior to the approval of their QA procedures by a designated awarding body.

As set out in the *QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines*, quality assurance procedures include provision for engagement with external partnerships and second providers. Quality assurance procedures cover all such arrangements, including sub-contracting of provision, research or other partnerships in programme or research provision or related services both at home and abroad as appropriate.

Providers of all blended learning that is credit-bearing and/or contributes towards an award of QQI or another state awarding body are required to have regard to these guidelines. Providers offering blended learning that is neither credit-bearing nor leading to an award recognised within the NFQ, are advised to be guided by the expectations and good practice captured here. This may mitigate the risk of reputational damage. Thus, these guidelines should also inform the development of other less formal kinds of blended learning, which may constitute a learner's first interaction with an online learning approach. It is important that the teaching and learning experience is a positive quality experience, with quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in place.