4.2   Principles for Quality Assurance Guidelines

The 2012 Act requires providers to "have regard to" QQI's QA guidelines (Section 28 [2]) when developing their QA procedures. QA guidelines cannot be adopted by providers as QA procedures, but must be used by providers to inform their internal QA procedures.

QQI will have regard to the guidelines when determining:

- protocols (prescribed mechanisms for meeting criteria[1]);
- criteria (things which must be demonstrated by providers in order to access services[2]);
- standards (thresholds for educational quality which must be met); and
- supplementary and supporting documentation for the guidance of providers and to provide further explanation.

1. For example: Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act PEL
2. For example: Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI

QA guidelines are intended to guide providers through their responsibilities for the quality of education and training, research and related services. They are developed in collaboration with the education and training sectors.

QA guidelines will be issued and published on QQI's website www.QQI.ie

QQI QA guidelines:

a. Are a crucial component of a variety of QQI functions, services and policies including:

- Validation of programmes (and re-validation)
- Review of providers
- Certification of learners
- Authorising use of the International Education Mark
- Recognition of awards within the National Framework of Qualifications
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Access, transfer and progression (ATP)
- Delegation of authority to make awards (DA)

b. Communicate expectations about the quality of provision, assessment and the teaching and learning experience in the Irish education and training community;

c. Bring greater coherence into, and between, different parts of the education and training system

d. Are the starting point for providers' establishment of their own QA procedures. They are a 'springboard' for improvement and enhancement for all providers, not a compliance checklist

e. Will be adapted and continuously evolve to remain fit-for-purpose for the needs of the education and training community and the qualifications system

f. Can be expected to have different purposes and different impacts in each sector and topic that they address. The impact of the guidelines upon a provider will depend upon the scope of their provision and the sector in which they operate.