

## 5.2 Approving the quality assurance procedures of linked providers

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QQI in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities to provide QA guidelines directly to the linked providers, has directed linked providers to have regard to the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

When considering the QA procedures of linked providers, designated awarding bodies will formally ensure that the linked provider has had due regard to the following:

### **QQI quality assurance guidelines as follows:**

- *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*
- *Sector-specific Guidelines for Independent and Private Providers (that seek QA approval from QQI or a designated awarding body on a voluntary basis)* as appropriate. These guidelines indicate the broad due diligence and risk assessment that must be carried out by the awarding body approving a provider's QA procedures. They focus on the capacity of the linked provider to adequately deliver programmes leading to awards in the NFQ; compliance with legal requirements, provider resources and provider governance
- Any other topic-specific QA guidelines, as appropriate

### **Designated Awarding Body specific requirements such as:**

- Policies, procedures and guidelines of the relevant designated awarding body
- Directions on the form and manner of the publication of quality assurance procedures approved by the Designated Awarding Body (Section 33 (3)) of the 2012 Act

Designated awarding bodies should apply due diligence and be aware of any reputational risk to themselves and the sector and/or national qualifications system associated with any prospective linked providers and also during ongoing monitoring and review of established linked providers.

*The following is a summary of indicative areas that designated awarding bodies should consider when determining whether or not to make awards in respect of a programme(s) offered by a prospective linked provider or to continue making awards in respect of a programme(s) offered by an established linked provider:*

### **1) Legal, reputation and compliance requirements**

- Is the provider a legal entity, with education and training as a principal function?  
~ Is the legal entity a clearly identified legal person, having rights and responsibilities under law?

*Has the provider*

- Clearly specified its dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries?
- Has the provider declared any third-party relationships and partnerships?
- Does the provider comply with applicable regulations and legislation in all jurisdictions in which it operates?
- Is the provider in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any jurisdictions in which it operates (or in which its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or in which it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators?

### **2) Resource, governance and structural requirements**

- Is the provider stable and in good financial standing?
- Does the provider have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?
- Does the provider have fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision-making structures?
- Does the provider have arrangements for providing required information to the designated awarding body?
- Does the provider have capacity to deliver education and training as demonstrated through experience and track record in providing education and training programmes?
- Does the provider have sufficient resources, as well as corporate, structural and internal quality assurance systems in place, to sustainably provide education and training programmes submitted for programme approval to the designated awarding body?

### **3) Programme development and provision requirements**

- Has the provider demonstrated its ability to design, develop, provide and review programmes as appropriate and comply with the standard conditions for programme approval specified by the designated awarding body?
- Does the provider have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?
- Does the provider have fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources?
- Does the provider have structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learner achievement?
- Does the provider have arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners?

### **4) Significant changes to requirements**

Has the provider notified the designated awarding body of any significant changes to the requirements set out in 1) to 3) above following implementation.

Designated awarding body procedures set out under Section 33 (2) of the 2012 Act, will have regard to the fact that it may:

- Approve the proposed procedures of a linked provider;
- Refuse to approve the proposed procedures but make recommendations; or
- Refuse to approve the procedures.