

FOREWORD

The introduction of additional employer-led apprenticeships to the Irish education and training system is an innovative and positive development and is expected to complement the established suite of apprenticeships. The following Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeship seek to provide substantial and tailored guidance for the development, delivery and evaluation of apprenticeship programmes by the party with quality assurance accountability to QQI, referred to below as the Coordinating Provider. This has led to a necessary emphasis on the Coordinating Provider role which is expected to be largely fulfilled by a provider operating within a wider consortium. The consortium itself will often be initiated by employers or employer representative bodies in order to meet the identified needs of employers.

The governance of a number of the elements that comprise apprenticeship extends beyond QQI's statutory quality assurance and awarding functions. In particular, the statutory role of SOLAS to approve and register employers; to register apprentices; to establish Industrial Training Orders¹; and to make statutory rules for the operation of apprenticeship, requires early acknowledgement in the context of this document. SOLAS and the HEA also have funding roles for further and higher education and training, respectively.

As a result, these QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship refer, at a number of points, to the requirements of SOLAS as statutory regulator in order to clarify for the Coordinating Provider that its responsibilities with, and on behalf of, a given consortium will be exercised within a context in which the roles of state organisations co-exist. However, it is the wish of SOLAS and the HEA that their roles and responsibilities be capable of complementing each other in order to meet the needs of employers and apprentices, as well as providers. In this context, and in conjunction with consortia, these Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes will be reviewed when an appropriate period has elapsed for their application to inform a further iteration.

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¹ *An Industrial Training Order is an order made under the 1967 Industrial Training Act that designates an activity as a specific occupation for the purposes of regulating apprenticeships within that occupation.*