



## **ECVET FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

### **IO2: ADAPTATION OF LEVEL 3 AWARD IN EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES QUALIFICATION TO NATIONAL CONTEXTS**

#### **IO2 NATIONAL LEVEL REPORT: IRELAND**

This report provides an overview of the processes and requirements involved in developing and accrediting new vocational qualifications in Ireland. It then goes on to explain how this relates to the work of the ECVET for ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (EfCI) project. The report also evaluates the work of Capacity Ireland in gaining accreditation for the LRN Level 3 Award in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries that forms the basis of the EfCI project and explores how this relates to the system for formal recognition of Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications in Ireland. It concludes by reviewing the outcomes achieved by Capacity Ireland through the EfCI project, the future possibilities for ECVET credit transfer that will be available as a result of this work and also suggests 'next steps' for potential future VET learners and training providers interested in studying or becoming accredited to deliver the LRN Level 3 Award in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries or other relevant qualifications.

#### **VET IN IRELAND**

Ireland's education and training system is divided into four main sectors: primary, secondary, further (post-secondary non-tertiary) education and training (FET), and higher education (see Figure 2). Vocational qualifications are provided primarily within the FET sector, with some courses also available in higher education. Most VET in Ireland takes place within the state sector, although private providers also play a role.

In recent years, aligning FET/VET with labour market needs has been an important priority in Ireland, with work carried out to identify skills needs to support providers in aligning relevant courses with the requirements of the labour market. As such, structural reforms have aimed to create a clear, integrated pathway for

learners within the FET sector in Ireland, in response to the needs of learners and the labour market.

## **KEY AGENCIES INVOLVED IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN IRELAND**

There are a range of agencies and organisations in Ireland which are responsible for managing and coordinating the VET programmes available within the country.

These include:

### Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland is the Irish state body responsible for the recognition, monitoring, development, and awarding of qualifications. It is responsible for maintaining and developing the National Framework of Qualifications and for promoting a culture of quality among education and training providers.

### Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

On July 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, the Ministry for Education in Ireland announced the establishment of sixteen Education and Training boards. These statutory education authorities, formed from the aggregation of Ireland's 33 VECs and the integration of the former FAS Training Centres became the vehicle for the delivery of coordinated education and training programmes across Ireland. The sixteen Education and Training Boards are based throughout Ireland's 26 counties.

### National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The National Framework of Qualifications is a system of ten levels used to describe the Irish qualifications system. The Framework incorporates qualifications achieved from school age, through to further education and training and higher education and training. The Framework can be used by both learners and employers to better understand the level of skills and competences gained by completing a certain qualification. Figure 1 below is a diagram to show where FET/VET fits within the NFQ. FET shares Levels 3, 4 and 5 with the second level education and Level 6 with some higher education institutes.



Figure 1

Source: *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014---2019/ SOLAS*.

### Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS)

*Foras Áiseanna Saothair*, or the Training and Employment Authority, was a state agency which was tasked with assisting jobseekers. The authority ran training courses in various fields, through regional centres, although some of this work was transferred to [institutes of technology](#) – including the [apprenticeships](#) in various fields that it regulated. It was formerly the primary organisation in the development and delivery of FET programmes. FÁS was dissolved in July 2013.

### An tSeirbhís Oideachas Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)

*An tSeirbhís Oideachas Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna*, or the Further Education and Training Authority, replaced FÁS in 2013 as the key organisation in developing and delivering FET programmes. SOLAS is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills and its main responsibility is to “build the identity and values of a world-- class, integrated FET sector that is responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a changed and changing economy.”

### Institutes of Technology

An Institute of Technology is an awarding body which makes their own awards between NFQ Levels 6 to 10. There are currently 14 ITs in Ireland and all of these work under the authority of the QQI.

## **DELIVERING ACCREDITED VET IN IRELAND**

To gain qualification accreditation in Ireland, training organisations must apply to Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established on 6 November, 2012. QQI is the successor to the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Further Education and Training (FET) Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (the three bodies established by the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) (established in 2002 by the Irish universities to carry out certain functions under the 1997 Universities Act). This amalgamation fulfilled a policy decision announced

by the Government in October 2008. When introducing the Bill in September 2011 the Minister for Education and Skills told the Seanad (the Senate, which is the upper house of the Irish legislature) that the reason for amalgamating the agencies was to bring about a more efficient and integrated service in “a strong single organisation prioritising the needs of learners and delivering quality service to providers”.

While the 2012 Act maintains substantial continuity it also introduces a variety of new features that were not present in the 1999 Act, which it replaces. These include an international education mark (IEM), a national database of programmes and awards, and a variety of uses of the concept of awards recognised within the NFQ. Moreover, bringing the four bodies together requires significant changes in the way in which functions are implemented. Even where the previous legislation prescribed similar functions; the way in which these were implemented varied across the bodies

Since the NFQ was introduced in 2003 all of the qualifications made by the national awarding bodies in Ireland (the State Examinations Commission, the universities and institutes of technology, FET Awards Council, and HET Awards Council) have been within it. The NFQ is playing an increasingly important role in various aspects of Quality Assurance. These include helping to link the provision of education and training and the learning outcomes achieved with the purposes for which qualifications are used, notably in relation to employment. Qualifications frameworks have been introduced in many countries in recent years and the Irish framework has been referenced to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. A feature of the Irish framework has been its openness to making formal connections with other national frameworks and to exploring methods of recognising a wide variety of qualifications while still maintaining robust QA.

Public education and training providers, bodies authorised by law to make awards in the state and professional recognition bodies have an obligation to engage with QQI in relation to their awards; private providers can seek to engage QQI to make their awards or can seek to have their awards recognised by QQI within the NFQ. There is a clear link between awards being assigned to a level in the NFQ and the process of ensuring that the intended learning outcomes are being achieved. The link between framework qualifications and the QA behind these qualifications is paramount and requires QQI to deliver a coherent and holistic approach to qualifications and quality assurance as it develops its suite of policies and associated procedures.

## **RECOGNITION FOR NEW VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN IRELAND**

Institutes of Technology and Universities are the *only* delegated providers of NQF qualifications – no private organisations have the authority to do this. Thus, all organisations wishing to provide accredited VET qualifications must apply through QQI.

As previously mentioned, Ireland now has over 22,000 FET courses available. While the majority of these are provided through various state bodies, there are many private providers and QQI provides information online on how to apply for QQI recognition.

<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Initial-Access-to-Programme%20Validation.aspx>

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Guide%20to%20Initial%20Validation%20of%20Programmes%20Process.pdf>

Attaining QQI recognition involves two stages – quality assurance and programme validation. Providers must attend a briefing before commencing the process. The first of these stages has four prerequisites, with which all proposed providers must comply before progressing to the validation stage. Firstly, it must have established procedures of quality assurance that are relevant and appropriate for the proposed programme. Secondly, procedures must be established for access, transfer, and progression. Thirdly, arrangements must be in place for the protection of enrolled applicants. Finally, the provider must consult with any other provider who provides or partly provides the programme, and the involvement of any and all other providers declared. Applications for consortiums are more complex but the principles are similar.

The fee for the submission of quality assurance procedures for new providers of FET programmes is €5000, which is non---refundable regardless of the outcome. Stage 1 approval lasts 6 months, and if an application for validation is not made within this time the quality assurance must be submitted again including the fee.

Refusal of applications has two levels; non---approval with recommendations, and refusal to approve. The latter is a firm decision that the applicant does not have the capacity to meet the above criteria, however it may be subject to appeal by applicants within a specified timeframe. A non---approval with recommendations

allows the applicant to incorporate certain recommendations and resubmit their application without paying again.

Information on fees:

[http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Schedule\\_of\\_Fees\\_July\\_2014.pdf](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Schedule_of_Fees_July_2014.pdf)

If the application is successful at Stage 1, the provider may then apply for Programme Validation, which incurs a further fee based on the level of the proposed programme – again, this is non-refundable. This application must include further details of the programme including but not limited to: a detailed outline of the programme including what is taught, by what means, how it is assessed, how it is managed and quality assured; to which NQF level it pertains; CVs for the programme's key staff; precise information on physical resource requirements; a five-year plan; and samples of learning and assessment criteria. In addition, the applicant must attend a briefing on QQI validation requirements.

QQI stipulate that they will validate programmes through which they are satisfied with the following criteria:

- i. The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme
- ii. The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought
- iii. The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)
- iv. The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory
- v. The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose
- vi. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned
- vii. There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned
- viii. The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners
- ix. There are sound teaching and learning strategies
- x. There are sound assessment strategies
- xi. Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for
- xii. The programme is well managed

There are three possible outcomes at this stage. Ideally, the programme will be deemed satisfactory such that it can become a validated QQI qualification. If it is

judged to be *near* satisfactory aside from some very minor issues, it may be returned with special conditions or recommendations – in this case the application may be resubmitted without a fee. Finally, of course, the application may be deemed not satisfactory and rejected outright. All returned decisions must include detailed rationale for the conclusion.

Both stages of this process are normally completed within 25 weeks of receipt of the relevant application (i.e. 50 in total). Validation through QQI also authorises VET providers to use the International Education Mark (IEM).

Once a provider has previously engaged with QQI the process is simpler for gaining recognition for other courses and qualifications, although QQI accredited programmes must apply for revalidation every 5 years through a process of self-evaluation.

### **ACCREDITATION AND RECOGNITION IN THE CONTEXT OF ECVET FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

As a partner in the ECVET for Entrepreneurship in the European Creative Industries (EfCI) project, Capacity Ireland has sought to achieve both accreditation to deliver the UK qualification that is the basis for the project – the Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries– for VET learners in Ireland and also recognition of the qualification in Ireland by QQI in order to facilitate credit transfer. The three main steps we have followed to achieve these aims have been:

1. Adaption of the course content to suit the context in Ireland
2. Applying for accreditation with LRN to deliver a pilot version of the course
3. Applying for accreditation with QQI to deliver recognised community development qualifications in Ireland

### **ADAPTION OF THE COURSE TO THE CONTEXT IN IRELAND**

The content of the course did not have to be adapted much to fit the situation in Ireland, due to the fact that the LRN Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship for European Creative Industries is designed to equip learners with the knowledge and skills to understand key aspects of working within the Creative Industries and how to put these into practice in their job, work experience or within the context of developing their own creative business or project and these do not largely change whichever European country the student comes from. However, wherever there was reference to creative industries in Ireland and specific work the student had done, we obviously had to use Irish examples to illustrate these points.

Some of the content of the course did have to be adapted to fit the situation in Ireland, due to the fact that the historical background of community development in this country is quite different to that of the UK. As well as this, wherever there was reference to community organisations and specific work they had done, we obviously had to use Irish examples to illustrate our points.

However, the actual structure of the course did not change and the same subject matter was covered without having to amend the specification at all. This was helped in large part by the fact that the method of teaching/educational delivery in Ireland is very similar to that used in the UK in that it puts emphasis on the students undertaking individual research and private study. They are encouraged to find the answers for themselves, which is different to the approach in other European countries where the focus is more on the teacher providing all the information needed.

### **LRN ACCREDITATION**

Gaining accreditation from the LRN in the UK was very straightforward. We were supported through the application by DSC Regen, who had already achieved accreditation with LRN in the UK and advised on all aspects of the LRN Centre Accreditation application form. We sent off our centre application form in the last week of August 2016 and it was approved the following week – the course specification is available via this weblink :

[http://www.lrnglobal.org/?page\\_id=1420](http://www.lrnglobal.org/?page_id=1420)

Having achieved accreditation with LRN, we delivered a pilot version of the Level 3 Certificate in European Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries for 10 VET learners from Ireland from September to December 2017. The course comprised the following 4 units:

(1) Creating A Personal Brand and Online Presence (2) Communication, negotiation and conflict resolution strategies (3) Introduction to Business Planning for Creative Industries Practitioners and (4) Creative Industries Entrepreneurship in Europe.

All of our learners combined studying towards the course with undertaking an international work placement in creative organisations based in Spain and the first 3 units focused on creative industries in Ireland and the final unit (which is designed to look at creative industries in another European country) focused on Spain.



The total time allocated to the course was 230 hours, including 65 guided learning hours, 45 self-study hours and 120 workplace hours (i.e. the time the learners spent undertaking their international community development work placement, although in reality, most gained much more than 120 hours work experience).

All 10 learners successfully completed the course – a more detailed review of the pilot course in Ireland is provided as part of IO3.

The qualification that our learners were awarded – the Level 3 Award in European Community Development – is equivalent to Level 5 within the Irish NQF. The reason for this is that within the UK NQF there are pre-entry levels equivalent to Irish Levels 1 and 2 in Ireland and then 8 further levels equivalent to Irish Levels 3-10. This is supported by NARIC Ireland, which provides advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland (it is worth noting that there are equivalent NARIC organisations in all EU countries). This weblink for the NARIC Ireland database <http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/RecognitionDetails?recognitionCode=296> shows the equivalence between a UK Award at Level 3 and an Irish Award at Level 5. However, In Ireland this level of qualification normally comprises 1,200 Guided Learning Hours over two years. Therefore, although a Level 5 course is equivalent to a Level 3 course in the UK, what is required in terms of the breadth of topics covered and the time requirement from both the training provider and learners to deliver a full Level 5 qualification – referred to as a ‘Major Award’ – in Ireland is very different.

In terms of achieving credit transfer for ECVET purposes, Capacity Ireland and the other EfCI project partners in Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK are all now accredited by LRN to deliver the Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship in European Creative Industries. Thus, a learner based in Ireland is able to start the qualification with Capacity Ireland and, should they wish – for example for the purposes of continuing their study whilst undertaking work experience in the creative industries sector in one of the other partner countries – could transfer their credits already earned with Capacity Ireland to one of the other EfCI partners and complete the course and achieve their qualification with them. However, what this does not address is full recognition of the qualification in Ireland and our work in this area and progress to date is outlined below.

## **QQI ACCREDITATION**

The process by which a provider gets a new course accredited by QQI for the first time is called ‘Initial Access to Programme’ and seeking ‘programme accreditation’ (i.e. accreditation for a new course) must first seek QQI approval for their quality assurance systems. At present, Capacity Ireland is still at the initial application

stage to become an accredited centre able to deliver QQI recognised community development qualifications.

Applications for accredited centre status can only be made online (and QQI is the only organisation involved in this process). The support that organisations receive is largely online, although one initial consultation with a member of the QQI staff has taken place. This consultation was useful and the consultant made it clear that we would not be able to get separate validation for the LRN accredited Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries Course as the QQI already awards numerous similar qualifications in Entrepreneurial and Employment Skills; these are Minor Awards and are individual units (usually worth 15 credits) within a Major Award. The Level 3 Award in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries does not differ enough from the already existing courses and therefore, in order to deliver the Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries in Ireland leading to a QQI recognised qualification, we would have to become accredited to deliver one or more of the existing QQI accredited Major Award qualifications.

QQI advised us to recruit the services of an External Verifier whose role it would be to assist with our centre application and to assist us with any challenges or obstacles we were facing with our application. We have found this to be helpful to us over the last few months; the external verifier we have consulted with is Liz Harper, she has previous experience supporting training organisations that wish to apply for QQI validation.

As stated above, there are significant differences in the length of the course when comparing a Level 3 Award in the UK with a Level 5 Major Award in Ireland. One of the possible solutions suggested that would enable us to progress towards QQI accreditation was to apply for delivering the qualification as a 'Minor Award', which constitutes 15 credits and a notional 10 hours GLH (Guided Learning Hours) for each credit. As previously stated, a Minor Award is equivalent to one unit of a Major Award; this would not be recognised as a full, stand-alone course but as one unit of a full course. The advantage of gaining validation for delivery of this minor award is that we would have gained acceptance of our quality assurance procedures and our modes of delivery of a course on the Irish QQI, this in turn would make it easier to apply for validation of any future courses that we may wish to deliver in Ireland. However, for the purposes of ECVET, Minor awards are not acceptable and consultation on this is ongoing.

A possible option would be to apply for accreditation of a Minor award in Entrepreneurial Skills at Level 5 which would form part of a Major Award in Creative Craft. Major Awards have a credit value of 120; with a notional 10 hours for each credit this would require GLH of 1,200 hours which would not be possible

with our present cohorts of students. It would also not suit our students who come from varying areas of the creative industries (they are also often already qualified in their specific area of creativity and do not require to be taught their craft at Level 5, or at any level) as the QQI Creative Craft qualification (5M1981) requires us to choose specific elements of the course to teach, i.e. a minimum credit value of 45 is required from a list of components including Painting, Furniture Making, Wood Turning etc.

Liz suggested that the best option for us just now was to apply for the minor award in Entrepreneurial Skills (an already existing QQI Award), which would fit in with our delivery of the full course in the UK. For this we must submit our quality assurance procedures and complete all the documentation required by QQI. Liz also suggested submitting a work experience course, which would benefit our particular students who all complete a work placement/internship in another European countries. We are still in consultation with the external verifier and will make a decision as to the benefit to our students of completing a work experience course (which would include CVs, application forms, covering letters etc and has a credit value of 15 and is incorporated into the Major Award in Creative Craft). Liz was, and still is, available to provide us with her practical advice and professional experience in dealing with the application process and we will continue to use her services going forward.

The process so far has taken approximately 12 months to get to the stage where we are ready to submit our application to become accredited by QQI. Further to this, QQI state that it can take up to 6 months from when the application is submitted to confirming accredited centre status. However, as we only intend to request accreditation to deliver minor awards, it may be possible to process our application more quickly and we are hoping to have accredited centre status in time for the cohort of learners we will be recruiting to start Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries courses in 2019.

### **OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS**

The ECVET for Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries (EfCI) project comes to an end in February 2019 but the project will continue to offer a legacy for both learners and VET providers interested in the creative industries sector in Ireland, especially those also interested in working within the creative industries at a transnational level.

Capacity Ireland is accredited by LRN to offer the Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries qualification for learners in Ireland and will continue to offer this course beyond the lifetime of the EfCI project. As noted

earlier in this report, although this qualification is not yet recognised in Ireland by QQI, it is fully accredited and recognised by Ofqual in the UK and there it is a well-established course. Furthermore, we hope to be in a position to commence delivery of QQI recognised Entrepreneurship in the Creative industries qualifications in 2019.

Capacity Ireland will continue to offer support for VET learners and training providers interested in either studying or offering these qualifications in Ireland beyond the end of the EfCI project and we have set out some 'next steps' for both potential learners and training providers below:

### **NEXT STEPS: LEARNERS**

For learners wishing to gain the Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries, we would suggest:

- Go to [www.lrnglobal.org](http://www.lrnglobal.org) to gain a full overview of the qualification specification to see if it fits in well with your previous level of study or work experience
- If you believe the course is relevant to your profession or interests and is of an appropriate study level, contact the LRN to find your nearest provider of the qualification (at the time of writing, Capacity Ireland is the only provider offering this course in Ireland)
- As the Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries is at the same level as a Level 5 qualification in Ireland, completion of the course would enable you to progress to QQI accredited Level 6 awards.
- This qualification would be a beneficial form of CPD to a creative industries practitioner who has already achieved a relevant national qualification. In particular, if you are looking to work overseas, the European nature of the course means that having it would give you a significant advantage when applying for creative industries jobs in other European countries
- Once we have achieved accreditation to deliver QQI accredited Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries qualifications, we will update this guide to provide relevant information for interested learners.

### **NEXT STEPS: VET PROVIDERS**

For VET providers wishing to either gain accreditation for the Level 3 Certificate in Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries, or if you are interested in gaining QQI accreditation to deliver this qualification in Ireland:

- Go to [www.lrnglobal.org](http://www.lrnglobal.org) and download the full qualification specification to gain a comprehensive idea of the course content and the level of learner study and support required
- Undertake a review to research if you have adequate demand for the course and if it fits in well with your centre's capacity to provide resources
- If so, email the Learning Resource Network ([enquiries@lrnglobal.org](mailto:enquiries@lrnglobal.org)) and request a Centre Accreditation Application Form. Capacity Ireland will be happy to support Irish training providers looking to become accredited to deliver this course and can advise on completing the LRN Centre Accreditation Form
- Upon receiving accreditation, you can contact Capacity Ireland for further support and advice in relation to developing your own course materials and delivering the qualification
- For training providers interested in gaining accreditation to deliver QQI recognised qualifications, Capacity Ireland will be happy to share our experiences, including providing advice and feedback on the centre accreditation process and completing the relevant forms and information required by QQI.

If you are a potential learner or training provider interested in either studying or offering entrepreneurship in the creative industries qualifications in Ireland and would like to discuss any of the topics covered in this report, enrol in a course or investigate the potential for your organisation to become accredited to deliver these qualifications, you can contact our Head of Centre, Virginia Young --- [viriniayoung@capacityireland.ie](mailto:viriniayoung@capacityireland.ie) --- who will be happy to offer advice and support.