Quality Improvement Plan Progress Reporting and Planning 2019-2020/21:

Update on progress in respect of LMETB activities outlined in

the Quality Improvement Plan 2019-20/21

LMETB Quality Reporting: Part 2: Detailed update of activities in the LMETB's Quality Improvement plan 2019-21

Contents

Introduction

This report on Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) documents the quality assurance objectives and activities identified by Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) for the period January to December 2019 and continuing in 2020/21. This QIP is a follow-on from the 2018 plan that was developed following a self-evaluative process and report on LMETB's quality assurance structures, processes, policies and procedures. In developing our 2019 QIP, LMETB has been guided by key areas in QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. In addition, our experience of the 2018 QIP has informed us of QA areas needing development beyond 2018. Activities in any given year built on work undertaken in previous years. The plan is now in its third year.

This document reports on the progress made in 2019, in respect of the identified priority actions and provides a summary of the following: a) The key areas of focus prioritised for quality improvement activity in 2019. b) The main quality improvement achievements in 2019 c) Comments on the barriers and challenges encountered in implementing the actions outlined in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2019 d) Details on the key areas of focus for quality improvement activity in 2020/21. The areas identified in this improvement plan fall under the 11 core quality areas of:

1. Governance and Management of Quality	7. Supports for Learners
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance	8. Information and Data Management
3. Programmes of Education and Training	9. Public Information and Communication
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	10. Other Parties involved in Education and Training
5. Teaching and Learning	11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
6. Assessment of Learners	

It is important to note that some of the activities and tasks identified in this QIP extend into medium and longer term and, therefore, will extend beyond the limits of this plan

Part 2: Detailed update of activities in the LMETB's Quality Improvement plan 2019-21

1. Governance and Management of Quality

Priority areas in 2019

- The development of a new QA unit to assist with the development, implementation and monitoring of an effective, integrated QA system for all LMETB FET provision.
- Continued development and review of governance sub committees.

Main achievements in 2019

- The QAGMC approved a range of policies (listed below) which were developed through several working groups initiated by the Quality Assurance sub-committee.
- A working group set up by the Communications sub-committee has been instrumental in managing a branding initiative for FET for promotional and marketing purposes. This initiative is at an advanced stage of being rolled out or LMETB FET services.
- An indicative outline of the QA manual has been agreed by the QAGMC.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- The recruitment of the QA Unit was delayed in Q3 2019 due to a lack of suitably qualified applicants. A second more focussed recruitment campaign has led to the successful appointment of staff in this area in 2020.
- Staff turnover due to the upturn in public sector recruitment and promotional opportunities, in addition to retirement and maternity leave / career breaks among staff, resulted in significant change in the governance units/working groups during 2019. From a positive perspective, however, this has resulted in the recruitment of new and additional staff to LMETB, the benefits of which should be evident in 2020.
- Targets are being achieved on an on-going basis and are highlighted in further detail in the QIP for 2020.
- LMETB is in the initial phase of implementation of its strategy to amalgamate and integrate a single unified Quality Assurance Framework throughout the organisation.
- The membership of the QAGMC is being extended to include representation from external agencies, also, thus broadening the experience and perspective of the governing body.
- Learner representation on the Governance structures has been difficult to achieve due to the shorter nature of FET courses. This is being addressed through the use of the learner forum / feedback mechanisms.

Priorities in 2020 / 2021

- Development of a QA Unit to support the governance structures and Senior Management Team of the LMETB FET division.
- QA Unit to comprise of the AEO with lead responsibility for quality, the QA officer, in addition to the RSTC Training Standards Office representation; and, will be supported in its work by the Community Education Facilitator (CEF) positions for PD/CPD; the Enterprise/Employer engagement co-ordinator; and the Technology Enhanced Learning officer.

- Continual review of LMETB governance structures particularly in relation to:
  - increasing external representation /independence within the governance units, in particular those at the QAGMC i.e. centre level
  - provision of a clear separation between those that engage in programme modification/development and those that approve proposals in relation to same.
  - how they can be illustrated with a clear diagram/flow-chart and include Terms of References (TORs) for each of the relevant governance units setting out, inter alia, a) clear roles and responsibilities for members of those governance units and how the units are connected to one another e.g. QAGMC, RAP, Programme Management Committee, Programme Review Committee.
  - how they provide clear reporting requirements for each unit i.e. what will be reported, who will report and the form it will take i.e. combined EA reports
- Review the inclusion learner voice as part of the Governance structure
- The QA Officer will support the governance structures and Senior Management Team of the LMETB FET division.
- This unit will have an (advisory) role on each of the governance and management units. This enables a clear separation between those responsible for producing/recommending and those responsible for approving, a maxim integral to good governance.
- The unit will comprise the AEO with lead responsibility for QA and the QA officer. It will also have representation from the Training centre's Training Standards Office. The Unit will have overarching responsibility for QA. It will undertake a series of centre visits to inform and explain their roles and purpose to FET staff. It will also brief staff about the new QA system and the Inaugural Review and consult with them about QA matters. The feedback from these events will be analysed and reports will be developed to inform SMT, Governance structures and staff about the outcomes.
- LMETB will then be in a position to fully operationalise its QA Governance structures, having previously agreed terms of reference for each of the identified committees, and, identifying their potential membership. It will do this by rolling out a development and implementation process whereby Staff and stakeholders will gain a fuller understanding of the purpose of each Governance unit including their planning and decision-making processes and roles; proposed work plans; meeting schedules and intended outcomes for each group. This will be achieved by extensive briefing sessions to inform staff about the work programme and Terms of Reference (ToR) of these structures and will facilitate feedback and will embed a shared QA system and quality culture. A review of the ToR of each committee will be required every 12 months.

- To ensure a systematic approach to monitoring and review of QA, each policy area needs to be assigned to a specific governance sub-committee as a policy owner and specific annual review dates for each QA policy and procedural area need to be selected.
- The activities of all sub-committees will report to the QAGMC Committee as the most senior unit charged with maintaining organisational oversight in terms of quality assurance and advising on and approving significant decisions in relation to the quality assurance system.
- Regarding LMETB governance structures there is a need to consider:
  - Increased external representation within the governance units.
  - how they provide for a clear separation between those that engage in programme modification/development and those that approve proposals in relation to same.
  - how they can be illustrated with a clear diagram/flow-chart and include Terms of References (TORs) for each of the relevant governance units setting out, inter alia, a) clear roles and responsibilities for members of those governance units and how the units are connected to one another e.g. QAGMC, RAP, Programme Management Committee, Programme Review Committee.
  - how they provide clear reporting requirements for each unit i.e. what will be reported, who will report and the form it will take i.e. combined EA reports
  - the need to try to avoid membership on multiple committees on somewhat related matters.

- Develop ways in which the learner voice can be represented effectively at each of the Governance structures.

2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Priority areas in 2019

- The development of an integrated QA system comprising new policies and procedures, which are effective and fit for purpose.

Main achievements in 2019

- A number of policies and procedures have been developed and published on the website, reflective of the requirements of the core 11 QQI QA guidelines. These include:

  ➢ LMETB Policy on the Formulation & Issuance of ETB FET QA Policies (Policy on Policies)
  ➢ Version Control Template and example
  ➢ LMETB Further Education & Training Admission Policy
  ➢ LMETB Learner Charter
  ➢ LMETB Assessment Procedures Handbook 2019: *The Assessment documents include the following: 1. Assessment Procedures Handbook; 2. Secure Storage; 3. Malpractice and associated templates, 4. Reasonable Accommodation; 5. Assessment Deadlines covering short term extensions, compassionate consideration and associated templates; 6. Assessment Process Appeals and associated templates; 7. Assessment Result Appeals and associated templates; 8. Examinations; 9. Glossary of Terms.*
  ➢ LMETB Staff Communications Policy June 2019
  ➢ LMETB Publication of Quality Assurance Evaluation Reports
  ➢ LMETB Public Information Policy
  ➢ LMETB FET Learner Contract
  ➢ LMETB Learner Information Policy
  ➢ LMETB Integrating Literacy Policy
  ➢ LMETB Access Transfer Progression Policy

- Exclusive to LMETB FET staff, a new LMETB portal on SharePoint for the storage and communication of QA information has been created. It will also act as a repository for QA resources.
- A license for Microsoft Visio software has been purchased which will be used to develop the QA handbook.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- A process of engagement with FET centres/colleges is being facilitated the by AEO as part of the preparation for the QQI statutory review process. The focus of this engagement process is to review the extent to which LMETB FET division's documented QA is live and embedded within practice across the services. It is expected that this process will reveal weakness and strengths of the existing QA system, and the extent to which there a general consistency of understanding of LMETB's new policies and procedures and what gaps exist in policy development; and the extent to which some areas of practice that pertain to the documentation of QA at LMETB can be improved, i.e. the extent to which the open and informal culture of the organisation is relied upon to inform activities in lieu of a formal set of procedures, structures and documentation.

  Expected areas for improvement of QA will likely be around governance and its documentation particularly the need to align the LMETB's QA documentation to current QQI core guidelines.

  Within this context the SMT/the QA unit/and the QAGMC will need to consider the following key questions/points:

  - the extent to which LMETB's QA system is documented and embedded within the organisation and implemented with consistency across its multiple delivery sites. i.e. How LMETB manages the potential QA risks of multi-programme delivery effectively (this is currently largely achieved through internal communication and cross site co-operation e.g. through use of SharePoint, email communications & CPD training days for staff)
  - how developed and comprehensive the Policies and Procedures manual is, i.e. does it provide effective guidance on the quality assurance systems in place, which underpin LMETBs teaching and learning programmes?
  - is the QA manual user friendly/ easy to update and the extent to which it sets out the governance structures clearly within it

- the extent to which all policy and procedure areas have a policy owner and review date, and that connections exist between the policy documents and the yet to be incorporated Tutor and Learner Handbooks to ensure cohesion and consistency, especially in terms of information to learners.
- the extent to which monitoring, review and updating of the QA system is reflected in the manual.
- LMETB uses an online system to store and disseminate QA information to staff, which includes a version control system. (does this enable key changes to be effectively tracked as the QA manual evolves).
- some policies will cross reference to others within the text therefore the policy cover page needs to include any relationship details, and this may be problematic when updating takes place if this is done in isolation. Requires hyperlinks to other policies.
- each policy and procedures will be required to have a consistent approach in presentation and identifies version number, policy number, approval date, review date etc.

Priorities in 2020 / 2021

- LMETB will continue to develop its Quality Assurance Procedures in 2020/21
- Developing policies relevant to the 11 core guidelines which are fully integrated across the organisation
- With the Establishment of the QA Unit the development of a fully integrated QA system comprising new policies and procedures comprehending all FET services will be accelerated; a process for this needs to be agreed to by the various stakeholders impacted by the changes.
- A review will be carried out to ascertain what additional policies require development.
- Version control - documenting and communicating a coherent governance and quality management system in a QA Manual- i.e. ensuring
  to apply the agreed versioning system to governance and quality management documentation
- Ensuring stakeholders are consulted with to develop new policies to further support an inclusive and quality culture. Continue to improve communication channels with staff to ensure the views of staff members are captured and used to inform the development of an integrated QA system.
- Develop a system to ensure policies and procedures are monitored and evaluated to support continuous improvement

- Ensure QA is embedded in all activities at all levels and that this is monitored, evidenced and evaluated at local levels as well as at a management level to support improvements and planning.
- Further develop the LMETB share point portal for the communication of QA information that is exclusive to LMETB FET staff
- Further consultation and approval of Word count policy
- Further consultation and approval of the *Behavioural Code Policy & Procedures for Further Education and Training (FET) Learners*
- All tutors should be fully resourced in terms of teaching and learning materials with reference to available budgets and access to QA documentation.
- The commitment to undertake a process of annual review of LMETB's QAs
- The extent of a documented formal procedure around learner representation and how it relates and interlinks to the committee structures.

3. Programmes of Education and Training

Priority areas in 2019

- Ongoing Review of the ATP policy which will support Access, Transfer and Progression within FET and to Higher Education and Employment.
- Enable the analysis of data to feed forward improvements to a course review process
- Establish mechanism to enable learner's voice and external stakeholder engagement within programme development/ course review process

Main achievements in 2019.

- LMETB hosted a learner forum in April 2019 in cooperation with Aontas, which was really well attended by over 100 learners across the provisions in FET LMETB.
- Continuing co-operation with other provisions, providers and agencies to assist progression opportunities e.g. North East Further and Higher Education Alliance (NEFHEA)/ MEND cluster and Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS).
- LMETB secured funding from SOLAS for an Advanced Manufacturing Skills project for the development of *Curricula and Flexible Delivery Methods* under the *Innovation through Collaboration Call 2019*. A project lead has been employed and work has begun in earnest.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- Developing an integrated approach to programme development that is streamlined and fit for purpose
- Designing a coherent model of evaluation for current programmes is challenging due to the diversity of the FET services and the plethora of delivery structures and methodologies
- Review of existing documentation regarding the learner pathway and transitions options.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- Developing policies and procedures for programme monitoring and review
- **Programme Approval:** For FARR planning, FET Centres or programmes wishing to develop a programme/module may make a proposal to the FET Senior Management Team, where consideration is given as to whether the development is in line with identified organisational goals and national strategies. Once the proposal for development has been approved by the SMT/FET director, the programme may proceed to development.

  Once the planning phase is complete, the programme/module is evaluated against a range of criteria by the Programme Development and Review Working group and approved by the QAGMC.

  The FET Senior Management Team reviews the recommendations of the QAGMC and if the proposal relates to the development of a new QQI programme or module the Quality Assurance Unit will submit it for validation to QQI.

  For non QQI programmes and modules where the awarding body is external, programme approval is requested through a similar process with the outcome being a submission for qualifications approval to the relevant awarding body.

  LMETB is committed to creating a revised programme approval model in line with the recently published QQI programme validation criteria.

  The documented process of getting a new programme from idea to implementation requires further elucidation.

  The policy needs to clearly illustrate what stages a new programme proposal moves through.

  The following aspects need to be considered for new programme/module development
  - ➢ What evaluation criteria is employed – what operational detail is required for new programme proposals?
  - ➢ The first step in developing a new programme is usually to carry out a feasibility study which includes financial aspects of provision. Who is involved and responsible for progressing its various constituent aspects? What criteria are used? How long does this process take?
  - ➢ What process is used in the decision to commit to a new programme?
  - ➢ Refinement of the QA documentation involved,
  - ➢ How are staff involved in the area of programme development?
  - ➢ What processes have been developed to formalise industry input?
  - ➢ What processes are in place for vetting placement opportunities?

- The new *Access, Transfer and Progression* policy needs to be subject to continuous review, and, its implementation requires ongoing consideration of the following aspects:
  - What policies and procedures are in place for learner admission?
  - how potential applicants are assessed for suitability?
  - Need to ensure the prospective learner is in the position to make a fully informed decision prior to enrolling on a programme. From the point when a potential learner expresses an interest in a programme, the where when and how of how they be interacted with to directly to answer any questions needs to be mapped out.
  - How are applicants advised and supported in choosing the most suitable programme in line with their own capabilities?
  - How does LMETB ensure, learners are not inappropriately referred to courses which may not meet their stated needs
  - How the suitability of learners is assessed for the model of delivery and does an assessment of, for example, their proficiency in English/ mechanical reasoning etc. take place? Maybe a need to document how pre–course assessments, including those in relation to English Language Proficiency, are carried out on a more informal basis.
  - What are the initial assessment processes to ensure the identification of any special requirements the learner may have and the opportunity for appropriate interventions to be put in place in a timely manner?
  - Are all applicants interviewed to assess their suitability for the course? Is there an appeal process for unsuccessful applicants?
  - Are there clear entry criteria specified on course brochures and on the LMETB's/the individual FET services website for each of the courses
  - Does it include English Language proficiency requirements?
  - How clearly identified are the stages of engagement: e.g. initial contact; registration and sign up; course study and certification.
  - How is each stage of the pathway supported with effective interventions to ensure the learner gains a positive learning experience? i.e. to what extent telephone, face-to-face and on-line support is made available at pertinent points along the journey.
  - There will be a requirement to undertake a self-evaluation exercise for each centre around these questions

- Development of a draft RPL policy: The course recruitment process should allow for fair recognition of prior education and training qualifications along with prior learning, both formal and informal as well as appropriate life experience when selecting suitable candidates to gain access to programmes.
- The further development and updating of a standardised learner induction framework for delivery across all FET programmes.

- LMETB is planning to host a Learner Forum (initially planned for April 2020). In the context of a MS Forms based survey and a planned seminar. Learners will be asked to provide feedback about programmes, courses and ATP. This feedback will be summarised and reported to managers to inform the future planning and development of programmes
- Completion of data reporting process for the SMT, Results Approval panels and the QAGMC to monitor and evaluate programme performance and future programme planning.
- Consultation will be required with staff to gather feedback about the development of an integrated programme monitoring, review and evaluation process. This will enable the production of a policy and procedure that is fit for purpose and adequate in scope.
- FET integrated programme planning: In conjunction with FET centre Co-ordinators/PLC college Principals it is intended to look at a co-ordinated approach to provision planning and to further develop progression pathways across the Further Education and Training Service. Part of the process will require managers to submit a form to the Programme Development and Review Working group outlining their plans for proposed courses (both new and renewals), so that they could undergo a QA check to ensure that they met the specific validation requirement or if another awarding body, their QA or qualifications approval requirements.
- A process for updating current assessments across all provision and at all levels is being considered/planned. The process will involve communities of practice coming together to review and update current assessments using a new and agreed template which will then available to all of FET. Assessments will be designed with feedback from SMEs, EA's and other stakeholder groups including learners.
- The Programme design and approval policy and procedures needs to be reviewed and mapped out diagrammatically.

4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Priority areas in 2019

- LMETB FET Staff are very proactive in attending CPD events including those identified as priority areas for 2019.
- A centralised record of all staff CPD was established by FET Management so it can be recorded and monitored. It charts all training activities offered and undertaken by FET tutors/instructors- based on centre level records (professional development training events for FET provision)

Main achievements in 2019

- An identification of CPD needs was undertaken in collaboration with SOLAS/ETBI at a national level, and in consultation with FET SMT and Centre Co-ordinators at local level.
- A centralised record of all staff CPD was developed so all CPD undertaken can be recorded and monitored.
- A number of TEL training events were provided for staff to encourage remote learning in addition to innovative approaches to teaching and learning including TELMS Project (Technology Enhanced Learning Mentoring Support) and the use of VLE's including MOODLE.
- The SOLAS FET Professional Development Strategy 2017- 19 set out the FET sector model for professional development. Continuing professional development in strategic areas including TEL and Change management is being supported. Several LMETB staff participated in both the SOLAS sponsored programmes in these areas.
- A QA Professional Development event 'The QA Handbook through the lens of QA Governance and Management' delivered by Trish O'Brien was attended in October 2019 by representatives from the SMT
- Several staff undertook CPD for under the ETBI/FESS National External authentication panel initiative. This should facilitate information sharing with colleagues and improve internal best practice.

- The annual LMETB FET Planning day was held Wednesday 16th October 2019 in the Crowne Plaza, Dundalk. The participation in this event of external agencies including Enterprise Ireland, the SMLRU and DEASP ensures that the FET team are well briefed on all aspects of skills and educational needs, to inform and involve annual FET planning document for the year ahead.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020,

- LMETB staff recruitment procedures are robust and transparent. Recruitment, however, is subject to DES sanction. In addition, the area of staff induction particularly regarding QA policies and procedures should be reviewed.
- Staff communication channels tend to be overly reliant on email. While staff utilise and have universal access to One drive and SharePoint, engagement with well-defined communication hubs within agreed platforms needs to be formalised.
- Level of engagement in staff CPD is good when courses are organised. A potential barrier may be the lack of structure around applications for PD. i.e. the Procedure for application for PD or link it into annual performance review mechanism. Procedure should identify the criteria for engagement (e.g. Relevance to current role, suitability for delivery to other staff members, train the trainer approach, feedback from other staff who have completed this course, cost benefit analysis)

Priorities in 2020/2021

- Review systems to further enhance staff communication and feedback (e.g. annual performance review type procedures).
- Review and enhance procedures for staff induction. Develop Procedure for planning of staff CPD, in addition to Procedure to monitor staff CPD at centre level on a bi-annual basis
- The review /development of an Induction pack should ensure there is detailed briefings on QA policies and procedures available, and emphasise, the importance of formative feedback and the expected approach to providing it. This promotes consistency in terms of the approach to teaching and learning across programmes.
- A calendar of CPD events for 2020/21: Development of an ongoing schedule for in-house continuing professional development which includes training relevant to areas of the QA framework.
- LMETB FET division will;
  - develop a policy and procedures around CPD for the development of staff delivering FET

- develop and maintain a professional development plan for FET staff to ensure they are upskilled in areas aligned to the FET PD Strategy, e.g. in line with their teaching area. This plan will include local, national and international professional development opportunities. Considerations for the policy on CPD will need to include:
- What are the different types of staff development, support and engagement that LMETB will provide support for. These can either be at the request of management or in response to a request from a staff member.
  - Does staff development apply systematically to all education and training activities and related services e.g. does staff development cover pedagogical and assessment techniques? The policy/procedure might benefit from greater clarity with the need to set out the specifics of timeframes, individual responsibilities, potential decisions and outcomes.
  - Establishment of a protocol and methodology to ensure when core members of LMETB staff teams go to training that they disseminate the knowledge and experience obtained to the wider team and other constituent parts of LMETB FET provision. Examples of best practice could be placed on SharePoint which can be accessed by all FET staff.
- Report on baseline information obtained from individual centres of training undertaken by tutors/instructors, together with a collated report on the annual reviews of skills gaps identified at centre level
- Procedure for Update/review the LMETB Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy
- Staff to be surveyed regularly and feedback gained regarding their experience of CPD events which will be catalogued.
- Certain CPD activities will be centrally planned, including activities on themes emerging from External Authentication Reports and recommendations from Results Approval Panels/Committees.
- Design and deliver a number of workshops to inform FET programme staff about the RPL process
- Collection and utilisation of learner feedback on teaching to support continuous improvement (Dealt with in more detail under section 11)
- In conjunction with AHEAD training in' Universal Design for Learning 'will be made available to FET centre Co-ordinators/managers to improve access for learners with disabilities.
- Team meetings: Need to collate and potentially standardise template documentation so as to harness relevant information from staff team meetings

5.Teaching and Learning

Priority areas in 2019

- Review/update/develop learner handbook
- Develop an Induction pack for new tutors
- Continue CPD in TEL
- Planning for the introduction/ use of Moodle as an online platform supporting programmes and learner

Main achievements in 2019

- Almost 200 additional PLC learner places secured.
- FET staff have participated in a range of CPD to support and enhance teaching and learning. These have included Jigsaw training 'An introduction to Youth Mental Health and a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing'; Therapeutic Crisis Intervention; child protection; TEL training; and online data protection.
- Staff from across the FET service attended a TEL Mentoring Support One day session co-ordinated by FESS (Further Education and Support Service). A number of the attendees subsequently indicated their willingness to act as TEL Mentors within their respective Centres.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- LMETB is mindful of the significant role that learners/Apprentices play and the contribution that they make in reviewing programmes. Learner feedback is an essential element to the life-cycle of LMETB courses. However, the level of engagement with learners, as well as its formality, can vary across services, e.g. in some instances scheduled at specific key points (mid-term and end of term) through a programme. Information received can be used to address issues throughout the course as well as informing future iterations of the course (e.g. module choice).
- Currently there is a lack of uniformity as to how these systems apply across LMETB centres and services: outcomes, monitoring and review of learner feedback are dependent on the local centre FET coordinators and managers to consider and implement.

- Work experience is an integral part of most of LMETB's courses and a vital part of the learning process. It also assists learners to make the transition from education and training to employment, enhances the employability of the learner and is of direct benefit to employers. In order to address questions around uniformity of learner experience, quality assured policies and procedures relating to the sourcing and assessment of work-experience element needs to be developed.
- Creating more opportunities for the development of blended learning approaches within programmes at the higher certification levels.
- Allowing staff, the time to engage with innovative teaching methods including the integration of TEL whilst still delivering a quality provision.
- Creating a consistent approach to evaluating teaching within the classroom across the organisation

Priorities in 2020/2021

- A TEL officer will be appointed thus enabling a systematic approach to enhancing TEL across the LMETB's FET provision.
- Developing a systematic means of evaluating the learning experience on an ongoing basis to inform practice and continuous improvement.
- Review the Learner appeals policy to ensure an integrated consistent approach across the service.
- Review existing blended learning opportunities provided by LMETB in evening course provision and PLC programmes. The review will aim to capture best practice, share learning across the sector and identify area and opportunities to introduce blended learning as a vehicle in other FET programmes.
- Develop learner supports to enable integration and use of ICT as a learning tool. Learners are upskilled in ICT to enable and support participation/progression and assessment opportunities. This will tie in with LMETB's commitment to the use of ICT as a support to and aid for teaching and learning, effected through the LMETB TEL Strategy. This strategy highlights on-going training and upskilling of staff to increase effective use of ICT in classroom and training facilities, and to effectively utilise blended learning opportunities in programmes where appropriate.
- Learner feedback: Strategies to respond to learner programme feedback need to be developed in a systematic manner, so as to enable standardisation of procedures and harness the data gathered into programme reviews with clear reporting lines being devised. This may be effected through completed standard surveys on course content, delivery and management. i.e. through the use of a learner satisfaction Survey. It would be helpful to illustrate diagrammatically how the various sources (e.g. questionnaires, the student-staff liaison) feed into programme review and remedial actions where required.

- Develop an integrated work placement/experience policy. This will address the following questions/points:
  - How is the quality of teaching and learning experience and the fairness and reliability of workplace assessments ensured?
  - Elaboration will be required on how employers are selected, and the quality of the placement monitored;
  - How is feedback from employers collected; and what is the process used to incorporate this information and data into general course improvement {a systematic process of including employers' feedback into programme enhancement needs to be developed and its use monitored}.
- The following actions will be initiated in Q3 2020:
  - ➤ The development of a comprehensive Work Placement Pack for all learners undergoing this component of their programme.
  - ➤ The pack will document all relevant information for learners and placement providers including roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.
  - ➤ A checklist will be completed for all work experience placements prior to this activity being undertaken to ensure the suitability of the placements and the provision of appropriate learning opportunities to optimise the experience for the learner.
  - ➤ For work placements, there will be a consideration of the various mechanisms of mentoring support currently provided and harnessing best practise methodologies
  - ➤ Development a mentor work placement handbook

6. Assessment of Learners

Priority areas in 2019

- Review the existing IV processes with a view to developing standardised procedures across FET Centre
- Incremental Integration of FET Centre into centralised authentication process where practicable.
- LMETB will review the findings of the sectoral review on External Authentication and implement changes to the process as required once the national framework is agreed
- Review and Establish new guidelines for EAs for this coming year
- Appoint EAs with subject specialisms to undertake EA across centres

Main achievements in 2019

- The ETBI developed 'Assessment Handbook' was adapted and introduced across all FET provision.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- Developing an integrated standardised approach across the organisation with regard to Internal Verification and EA processes and procedures due to the organisational practises engrained within the centres.
- It is challenging to recruit appropriately qualified, experienced staff for very specialist areas such as QA, however LMETB have persisted in this endeavour.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- With the appointment of the new QA Co-ordinator, there will be a need to review the structures and process that are place which underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners, and to ascertain which of these areas require development? This review will encompass:
  - At what stages are Learners made aware of the associated assessment strategies in their respective programmes?
  - How/when Learners are given timely feedback e.g. through the use of e-mail, use of computerised results and face-to-face engagements with their tutor?
  - Are there robust systems in place to ensure the security of assessment materials and a rigorous system of both internal verification and external authentication to protect the reliability and integrity of assessment decisions made within LMETB?
  - Need to establish the degree to which assessment strategies at LMETB are fit for-purpose with regards to measuring the achievement of learning, and to what extent they promote and support effective learning and teaching.
  - Development/review of learner handbook(s) for consistency of messaging in language that is apt for learner cohort ensuring that they provide learners with information on the assessment process including the Appeals process.
  - Are all stages of the assessment process documented and communicated appropriately?
  - The extent to which assessment is subject to continual review and improvement by programme staff
  - Is practise appropriate in relation to repeat arrangements, late submissions and extenuating circumstances
  - Processes for review, recheck and appeal.
  - What will be involved in the RPL procedure.
  - Review the range of assessment methodologies employed across LMETB
- LMETB's QA unit will need to prepare a summary mapping sheet providing an overview of the various policy and procedure documents across which the assessment procedures are distributed.
- Development of a mechanism in place for feedback from stakeholders into the assessment process and the development of assessment materials linking with programme development.
- Continue with the integration and standardisation of approaches to Internal Verification & External Authentication
- Developing a process which aims to identify centre and programme improvement plans following an analysis of EA report recommendations and IV feedback along with data reporting which will help inform the QAGMC/ QA sub -committee regarding centre/programme performance and form the basis of information that will be required as part of the monitoring, review and self-evaluation of programmes.
- Continue with the review and modification of the assessment procedures handbook

- A key area of focus for quality improvement activity in 2020-21, will be the need to develop a bank of assessment instruments that is fit for purpose, and the process of collaboration involved in the design and trialling of these assessment instruments. These aspects will help inform LMETB assessment practise regarding the consistency of assessment issue.
- The development of a policy for the creating and updating of assessment materials would need to be considered. One possible quality assured approach to the updating of assessments is using a Communities of practice networks where stakeholders are brought together at stages during the year to review and update assessments so that they are current, valid and reliable, fair and transparent and quality assured. This would allow for the sharing of current practice, legislation, etc. to inform assessment content. Once completed the new assessments they can be reviewed by External Authenticators and relevant stakeholders, feedback taken, and assessments further updated. Following a QA check assessments where they can made available for release. Following 6 months of delivery the communities of practice can be brought back together to review assessment delivery, the review can include feedback from students. Any proposed changes can be discussed and recorded for consideration for further updates to the assessments.
- Following the development of a national EA directory LMETB may take the approach of creating its own panel. In order to support this a new EA policy and procedure will have to be developed, in conjunction with HR, to ensure a quality assured approach. This may entail the Developing of procedure for the appointment of External Authenticators (EA's) and will require any potential LMETB EA Panel to be recommended for approval by the assessment sub-committee and to the ratified by the QAGMC. Part of this procedure will require all EAs to undertake a LMETB QA induction to ensure they are cognisant with our QA procedures and to offer support if required. External Authentication if centrally managed, would enable reports to be analysed and data collated to inform (practice in respect of), the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the maintenance of standards based on learning outcomes and the effectiveness of programme, teaching and learning supports.
- LMETB continues to be responsive to employers needs and is working with employers to develop courses and programmes that are specific to their requirements.
- Creation of a Learner LMETB assessment handbook
- Utilisation of technology to enhance assessment approaches during COVID 19 crisis.

7. Supports for Learners

Priority areas in 2019

- Enhance and extend existing learner representation mechanisms
- Further development of FET learner Fora to inform programme/service development
- The learning environment includes pastoral care supports provided by staff for learners. This includes both pastoral and educational care, such as tutors, mentors, counsellors and other advisors and that learners know how to access them.

Main achievements in 2019

- Continued CPD of staff through attendance at training seminars organised by Further Education and Support Service (FESS) and the use of resources developed by FESS to support programme delivery
- Staff from across the organisation have attended training in Technology Enhanced Learning Mentoring Support. The literacy services in Louth is being introducing a peer mentoring scheme which will support the embedding of TEL to enhance teaching and learning and the quality of provision.
- The 2019 Learner forum resulted in a tremendous event taking place with in excess of 100 learners from across all FET centres and provision
- Learners participated in the AONTAS national FET learner forum from across the service.
- Award presentations were held by various centres and programmes to recognise and celebrate learner achievement.
- FET information days were held in Drogheda, Navan and Dundalk to offer insight and information on the range of opportunities available from LMETB FET Services.
- A number of staffs from across FET participated in training for supporting learners with Mental Health and Well-being issues

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- Resource within the guidance team to support the rolling out of a standardised induction across the organisation
- Creating a standardised student questionnaire that meets the requirements of a diverse learner cohort.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- Support for a learner's support policy will need to consider the following:
  - ➤ Is each learner interviewed individually before enrolment on a programme?
  - ➤ The extent of supports for learners with special needs.
  - ➤ How requests for special accommodations surrounding assessment are resourced.
  - ➤ Disclosure of special needs and request for accommodations process, how LMETB manages the process who meets with the Learner and what is formally agreed.
  - ➤ LMETB's commitment to improvement in the area of accessibility and inclusion. (The extent to which there are clear guidelines on how learners are assessed and on the adaptation of assessments to meet the needs of learners requesting reasonable accommodation and the funding support available for same.)
  - ➤ The extent to which Access and Mobility issues are ongoing challenges for LMETB; some of the organisation's buildings are listed and do not have lifts. What type of workaround measures as needed (for example, the installation of temporary ramps) are used to accommodate learners?
  - ➤ Specifically, developing awareness among staff of inclusive practices in teaching and learning and strategies for supporting learners with disabilities and learning differences could usefully be integrated into LMETB staff development. e.g. Staff induction and training could usefully include information regarding practical measures, such as personal evacuation plans for wheelchair users.
- Incremental roll out of Moodle Platform to supplement the teaching and learning experience as apt to cohorts of learners.
- Undertake and present report on existing arrangements for learner representation to the QAGMC.
- Roll out further training to support staff to help learners with dealing with poor mental health.
- Continue to offer TELMS training to support the embedding of TEL across the organisation.
- A standardised approach to student induction.

- A standardised learner evaluation which will be issued to all LMETB students during a programme to cover feedback relating to induction, services, teaching and learning, assessment etc. This feedback will then be issued to inform monitoring and evaluation of courses/programmes and the services offered by LMETB.
- The Learner Forum which was scheduled to take place in early April 2020 was designed to gather feedback on the learners' experience, assessments, student support, teaching and learning and the development of an online support. Analysis of the feedback will be used to help to action, plan, and identify improvements to the quality of teaching and learning across the service. It is intended that the results of the MS forms-based survey along with a report from a rapporteur will be developed into overarching detailed report. This report will form the basis of summary reports that will be issued to management, Centres, programmes and learners. Action planning will be formulated in response to the student feedback to support the quality improvement cycle.
- Initiate a review of learners' support across the service to provide information about what is working well and what needs to be improved.

8. Information and Data Management

Priority areas in 2019

- To develop a reporting system that allows access to reliable information and data to inform decision making in order to robustly evaluate what is working well and identify what improvements might be considered for incorporation.

Main achievements in 2019

- Initial steps commenced regarding the establishment of a Data Management working group, chaired by an SMT member. The working group will be responsible for developing strategies for managing the inputting, maintenance, monitoring and analysis of PLSS, ESF and FARR data. They will develop policies and procedures relating to data management and review current approaches and how they can be improved.
- A number of monitoring and evaluation reports will be designed. These will support SMT and Governance structures to identify areas for improvement

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

There is a need to review how LMETB is working in the area of data management and to set out a strategic vision and approach on how to do this in a more effective manner. Being able to synthesise, analyse and interpret reliable sources of information and data, which are live and up to date in order to support monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of the service is essential for an integrated QA system.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- The Appointment of a dedicated staff member to lead the data and information management strategy. This staff member will be responsible for data analytics within the FET division. He/she will need to establish how effectively LMETB is working in the area of data management. How are we accessing, capturing and utilising data sets as part of monitoring and review? And how can we incorporate these into future plans and decisions on course delivery and administration

- The use of PLSS reports for self-monitoring and planning purposes is recorded as a Quality Improvement Objective in the QIP 2018-2022- with the benchmark of the production of analytical reports of learner registration, retention, completion and certification to inform programme review and programme planning. A key area of focus for quality improvement activity in relation to data and information management will be the production of analytical reports in these areas.

- Update data management and related policies and procedures. LMETB will prioritise the utilisation of the PLSS system to capture information and data that will feedback to inform provision planning. The importance of this data and its validity is also prioritised in correlating information for reporting and analysing. Data will be recorded on a consistent and quality assured basis which is also compliant with legal guidelines under GDR and managing data release. The systems PLSS, RCCR and QQI infographics could be used to analyse data and to generate a range of relevant periodic information reports as appropriate to support each level of corporate governance and the SMT e.g. student progression, and retention could be reported annually to the QAGMC. For example: information on learner numbers could be provided with statistical overview reports on learner performance; An analysis of the grade distribution between the LMETB and the national average would provide valuable information in any future planning exercises.

- Monitoring of the PLSS data and reports in order to make timely interventions when assessing programme outcomes and their success.

- Need to develop a policy and develop an online managing version control of QA documentation to ensure staff are accessing the most up-to date information.

9. Public Information and Communication

Priority areas in 2019

- Work began on a new FET branding initiative. Formally launch to take place during Q2 2020
- Ongoing promotion of FET services to stakeholders such as employers

Main achievements in 2019

- Developed a series of animated videos for LMETB that informed the public about the range of FET services.
- Information days held in the to offer insight and information on the range of opportunities available from LMETB FET Service. Progression opportunities information was also available for existing students. Positive Feedback was gathered from clients/ staff and will inform the planning of future information days
- Staff from across the organisation continue to promote the organisation at public events. For example, attendance at DEASP information sessions, local stakeholder meetings, Events at local schools and Colleges, Education and Training Fairs, Career Symposium,
- Public Information and Communication Policy and Procedure has been approved by the QAGMC
- An increase in the volume of school tours/careers visits/workshops to the Training Centre .
- Extensive use of social media to promote available day and evening courses across the provision.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/20

- The LMETB FET Website requires a revamp to enhance the accessibility of information for existing and potential learners, staff and other stakeholders.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- Update website to include the new Governance and Management structure, its sub unit their terms of reference, membership and purpose.
- In reviewing the LMETB website FET section, the aim would be to streamline and hone, delivery of information in a more targeted way to specific and varied audiences of potential service users and Learners
- LMETB will commit to publishing reports arising from the operation of its quality assurance procedures. The types of reports to be published should be identified e.g. Programme Reviews
- The Communications sub-committee need to review develop a strategic plan, i.e. What process is in place to ensure that the information contained within policies and procedures that LMETB has published is clear, accurate, objective, up to date and easily accessible?
- Re-design/update a new prospectus for the LMETB FET offering.
- Course recruitment staff/guidance staff are collecting information during the interview process to ascertain how and where the prospective learners heard about FET services. This information will be collated and sent to the new Communications Officer to be used to gain a better understanding of the impact of marketing activities.
- Organisation of public information days in 2020 aligned to appropriate time where learners are making career choices.
- Implement new approaches to the prospectus and promote FET programmes under the disciplines of the learning that we offer.

10. Other parties involved in Education

Priority areas in 2019

- Continued development of relationships and partnerships with employers, state agencies and community groups to further develop and enhance FET provision throughout the catchment
- Collaboration with other education partners that will lead to new initiatives within the country
- Continued collaboration with other ETB's on QA matters and programme development issues.

Main achievements in 2019

- The organisation continues to maintain and develop relationships and partnerships with employers, state agencies and community groups to further develop and enhance FET provision throughout the two counties. These include collaborative information event with DEASP, Community Providers, Louth and Meath Co. Cos. and Interagency partners - Refugee Resettlement Families, Navan Travellers workshop, and various Chambers of Commerce.
- Work began in promoting the Skills to Advance Initiative with employers and employees through the RSTC, BTEI and DIFE.

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- Recruitment of key staff in the QA area has been challenging.
- Resources to release appropriate staff to engage in meetings.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- Roll out of the new national EA directory and local EA panel (as discussed under assessment of learners).
- LMETB recognises that collaboration is essential if services are to be delivered effectively and will continue to prioritise the development and maintenance of strategic relationships with community groups, statutory agencies, education providers and other stakeholders.
- Continue to engage and collaborate with other ETB's as appropriate in the development of sectoral initiatives
- Develop a process for recording engagement with employers and employee/employer development
- Carry out information sessions with external partners and second providers in relation to QA updates including the new Governance and Management structure and the Inaugural review.
- A work with the respective Regional Skills forum to explore the output of their Training Needs analyses of various sectors to explore the reskilling and upskilling of staff.
- Development of the Employer Engagement working group with agreed term of reference. The group will meet periodically to review engagement activities and to discuss ways of improving employer engagement across FET provision.
- Work will accelerate in promoting the Skills to Advance Initiative with the appointment of the Enterprise/Employer engagement co-ordinator.

11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Priority areas in 2019

- Work was initiated on assessing what review, self-evaluation and monitoring processes take place across the organisation.

Main achievements in 2019.

- The majority of provision engages with self-evaluation to some degree through various means in order to obtain feedback of learner experiences

Barriers and Challenges 2019/2020

- The need for uniformity of approach to review, self-evaluation and monitoring across the organisation.
- Learner feedback is an essential element to the life cycle of courses provided by LMETB. However, the level of engagement with learners, as well as its formality, varies across services, e.g. in some instances scheduled at specific key points (mid-term and end of term) through a programme. Information received can be used to address issues throughout the course as well as informing future iterations of the course (e.g. module choice). There is a need to work towards attaining a uniformity inregard to how these systems have application across LMETB centres and services: outcomes, monitoring and review of learner feedback are dependent on the local centre FET coordinators and managers to consider and implement.

Priorities in 2020/2021

- Strategies to respond to learner programme feedback need to be developed in a systematic manner, standardise procedures and feed data gathered into programme reviews with clear reporting lines to be being devised. This may be through completed standard surveys on course content, delivery and management. It would be helpful to illustrate diagrammatically how the various sources (e.g. questionnaires, the student-staff liaison) feed into programme review and remedial actions where required.
- Development of effective consultation processes which involve staff, learners and stakeholders in programme development/review with recognition of centre-based posts of responsibility for internal and external engagement to establish continuous information and feedback loops.
- Developing a systematic approach to internal review, self-evaluation and monitoring across the organisation.
- Develop report formats for course/programme development which includes data from various sources for example, student feedback, PLSS data, EA reports, IV reports, teaching evaluations etc. These will by synthesised to review the performance of courses so improvements can be put into place.
- LMETB aim to implement a uniform system for capturing learner feedback in Q4 2020. A single evaluation template form for use across FET Provision will come in to effect in that quarter. An evaluation template based on 14 questions (with a range of rating and descriptive type response options), will be piloted using Microsoft Forms. A Learner Feedback Report will provide data relating on overall satisfaction levels, teaching and learning facilities and practices, and engagement in learner support activities. The evaluation template will provide Centres/Colleges with a mechanism to roll out learner satisfaction surveys. Data capture of this nature will form the basis of a wider analysis of learner's experience of teaching, learning and assessment. A standardised procedure will be implemented by colleges/centres which will result in the collation of learner feedback by college/centres and the compilation of a college/centre report on emerging themes and trends. This information will feed forward into programme review.
- The processes for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review within LMETB need further development to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent system of quality assurance providing useful information to the QAGMC and to the SMT.
- The indicators of effectiveness for each of the policies and procedures within the QA document need to be clarified; how frequently are they evaluated; the mechanisms for carrying out this evaluation and review; and the processes for implementation of any recommended changes to practice.
- There is a need to document:
  - how data is captured and analysed; how is it reported on and to whom.

- ➢ Review of how learner engagement is measured, and how information on actions taken in response to learner feedback is circulated.
- There is a requirement to ensure all sub-committees report in a timely fashion to the QAGMC, which is the governance unit with organisational level oversight and decision making, to ensure connectivity is maintained.
- The QAGMC is charged with approving new programmes/modifications (prior to submission for validation to QQI or amendments to legacy programmes permitted under validation agreements), and therefore requires all pertinent information before arriving at any conclusions.
- The programme review sub-committee was formed to manage, monitor and review programmes on a regular basis, with programme FET centre co-ordinators feeding into this and the programme review Committee is also charged with more in-depth programme evaluations in accordance with a clear schedule.
- Preparation for the external review by QQI: In order to prepare of the statutory Review LMETB needs to embark on a process of self-evaluating the implementation of quality assurance procedures. The close consideration of quality processes; both planned and operational will be a key area of focus in 2020/21. These will involve establishing a Review steering group to identify and document what is working and how the implementation of quality processes can be improved. The establishment of the Review steering group, which will take the project lead on the process of self-evaluating the implementation of quality assurance procedures. The group will scope out and shape the way in which over the course of the year, LMETB will engage with stakeholders, compile information from evaluative discussions and synthesis the outcomes of the evaluation process.