

Colleges of Further Education in Northern Ireland

Arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of quality improvement planning: mid-cycle update submission 2023/24

November 2023



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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Context

The implementation of the Department of Education's and the Department for the Economy's (DfE) [14-19 Framework](#) is central to delivery of 'a [10x Economy](#)' and the policy objectives set out in the Skills Strategy, and in fulfilling [Fair Start](#) commitments. It is also a first step in addressing some of the challenges raised in the [Independent Review of Careers report](#).

In planning for the future, other DfE strategies and policies both on Skills, Tourism and Energy and the Executive's Programme for Government will also inform the economic response and wider strategic responses to address social inequalities, infrastructure and green growth.

The NI Skills Barometer forecasts future skills needs and skills gaps by qualification level, subject area and sector for Northern Ireland; an update report, the fourth publication in relation to the NI Skills Barometer, covers the coming decade to 2030.

This document sets out how the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will evaluate the effectiveness of quality improvement planning in the Further Education Colleges (the colleges) as part of the commissioned inspection services provided to DfE.

Introduction

A Quality Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Reporting Return 2023/24, a mid-cycle update **submission*** has been requested by DfE from each of the colleges, with submission no later than 22 January 2024. The arrangements for the submission are set out in correspondence of 29 September 2023 from DfE's Quality Improvement Team (QIT) to College Principals/Chief Executives. The mid-cycle update submission is part of the DfE's pilot arrangements for Quality Improvement Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting for the 2022-24 period and will be the focus of the ETI's desk-based scrutiny evaluation. It builds on the Biennial Self-Evaluation and Quality Improvement Plan submitted in December 2022 and is an integral part of the Biennial Quality Improvement Planning Submission required by the Department in 2024.

Throughout the report, where text is accompanied by an asterisk, this indicates that additional information can be found in Appendix 3: Notes.

While each college can implement internal self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes that meet their individual needs, the following requirements should be common across the colleges' quality improvement processes:

- the use of robust self-evaluation, based on an appropriate range of evidence, to inform curriculum planning at strategic and operational levels;
- the development of a whole-college quality improvement plan informed by the self-evaluation process that prioritises appropriate actions to address effectively any key areas for improvement identified;

- the implementation of monitoring and review processes that evaluate the impact of the actions taken to sustain improvement in the quality of the provision.

It is important that any approach taken to quality improvement planning takes account of the current policy context; is useful in supporting the work of the college; effects improvement in the quality of the provision for learners and the outcomes they achieve; and is manageable. Colleges may wish to access [ETI's support material](#) relating to quality improvement planning.

The following sections in this guidance document set out the arrangements for scrutiny by the ETI, on behalf of DfE, of the effectiveness of the colleges' quality improvement planning processes. These revised arrangements replace ETI's previous arrangements of October 2022.

Quality Improvement Planning Scrutiny

Based on the mid-cycle update submission, the ETI will carry out a desk-based scrutiny of the effectiveness of the college's quality improvement planning processes. The outcome of the scrutiny will be one of four, as outlined later in this document. There may also be ETI inspection visits associated with ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the work of the college.

Following the DfE's QIT receipt of a college's submission, the information submitted will be shared with ETI for scrutiny, which will involve an evaluation of the following aspects of the submission:

1. a completed DfE **Statement of Assurance***; and
2. the Mid-cycle Quality Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Reporting Return 2023/24 (the detail of the content of the Return already provided by DfE's QIT will be included in the evaluation).

Robust self-evaluation and quality improvement planning should be informed by appropriate use of data. It is therefore necessary that appropriate consideration is given to enrolment, retention, achievement and progression data associated with the broad delivery areas, professional and technical areas, and essential skills provision, to inform the self-evaluation and monitoring processes.

Data presented can be drawn from data sets already held on college systems and from the data included in the College Development Planning submission to DfE. The format of data presented is at the discretion of the college; how the data has been used to inform the self-evaluation and quality improvement processes should be included.

Response to the submission

The ETI's scrutiny of the submission will normally be undertaken by the District Inspector for the college. It is anticipated that the District Inspector will make contact with the college after the submission has been received from DfE's QIT to discuss the submission and also to provide some evaluative feedback.

When the desk-based scrutiny is completed, the ETI's Inspection Services Team will advise the DfE's QIT of each college's outcome, as set out below. The DfE's QIT will then write to the college to share the outcome and any associated actions.

Outcome A

On the basis of the information provided, there is sufficient evidence that the college is planning effectively for learning and quality improvement.

ETI will continue to monitor how the college brings about improvement. This may include an inspection visit.

Outcome B

On the basis of the information provided, there is insufficient evidence that the college is planning effectively for learning or quality improvement. In order to demonstrate more fully that there is effective quality improvement planning for learning, the college will be requested to submit additional information within four weeks for further scrutiny. Outcome A or C will then apply.

ETI will continue to monitor how the college brings about improvement. This may include an inspection visit.

Outcome C

On the basis of the information submitted, and including any additional information submitted within four weeks, there is still insufficient evidence that the college is planning effectively for learning and quality improvement.

DfE's Quality Improvement Team will indicate any further improvement actions to be taken by the college within a given timescale.

ETI will continue to monitor how the college brings about improvement. This may include an inspection visit.

Outcome D

The college has been notified of an upcoming inspection: the scrutiny evaluation of the college's annual quality improvement planning submission will be incorporated within the inspection process. Outcome A or B then will apply.

Inspection visits

Key reasons a college may be included in ETI monitoring or inspection visits typically include:

1. the scrutiny of the effectiveness of the quality improvement plan submission identifies that the college is not submitting sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it is planning effectively for learning and quality improvement;
2. the college has evaluated itself as having significant weaknesses in planning effectively for learning and quality improvement;
3. the completed DfE Statement of Assurance identifies only 'partial assurance' for the college's quality improvement planning processes; or
4. a request from DfE or an evidence-based risk is identified by the District Inspector.

The focus of an inspection visit would include evaluating the impact of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in identifying and bringing about improvement in the quality of provision.

Appendices

The tables in Appendices 1 and 2 can be used or adapted, where applicable to the 2023-24 Mid-cycle Update Return, to present findings and self-evaluation outcomes. The tables are aligned to ETI's [Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\)](#).

Appendix 1: Tables for presenting college's overall outcomes and findings

Overall effectiveness (please select one of the following)

- The college has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The college demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The college needs to address (an) important area (s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- The college needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners.

Overall Performance levels* (Please insert a Performance Level for each of the three areas below)

Outcomes for Learners	
Quality of Provision	
Leadership and Management	

Overall quality of the programmes evaluated

Broad Area/Programme	Proportion of Registration	Performance level
e.g. level 2 provision	%	
e.g. Traineeship	%	
e.g. Engineering	%	

The arrangements for protecting and safeguarding young people and adults (Please select one of the following)

- Reflect current legislation and practice.
- Reflect broadly current legislation and practice.
- Are unsatisfactory.

Care and Welfare (Please select one of the following)

- Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes.
- Does not impact positively enough on one or more of learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.

Summary of college's overall key findings

College: _____

Key findings

The provision has the following strengths:

-
-
-
-
-
-

To improve further the provision, the college needs to:

-
-
-

Appendix 2: Tables for presenting summaries of broad delivery areas, professional and technical areas, or essential skills provision key findings*

Broad delivery area/professional and technical area/essential skills

Title: _____

Internally self-evaluated performance levels

Performance levels* (Please insert a Performance Level for each of the three areas below)

Outcomes for Learners	
Quality of Provision	
Leadership and Management	
Overall	

Key findings

The provision has the following strengths:

-
-
-
-
-
-

To improve further the provision, the college needs to:

-
-
-

Appendix 3: Notes

- Page 2** **submission*** - A DfE QIT communication (29 September 2023) advised of arrangements for the submission of the further education colleges' Quality Improvement Plans, the associated self-evaluation processes and the resultant self-evaluative reporting of outcomes 2022-24.
- Page 3** **statement of assurance*** - DfE's QIT provides an Assurance Statement template; the college will be assuring DfE that they have a fit-for-purpose quality improvement plan in place.

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