

## UCC Linked Providers

### Outline Procedure for the Approval of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures

#### Background

UCC as a Designated Awarding Body (DAB) has prescribed responsibilities under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 and QQI Sector Specific Guidelines for Designating Awarding Bodies with regard to arrangements with institutions seeking or receiving validation of programmes leading to UCC awards.

The 2012 Act sets out the interpretation of a linked provider as follows:

(3) Subject to subsection (4), a linked provider is a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

(4) A provider of a programme referred to in subsection (3) is not a linked provider where the award referred to in that subsection is a joint award of the provider and the designated awarding body.

Where UCC makes an award in respect of a programme offered through a linked provider, it will as part of its QA procedures, identify a process to approve, monitor and review the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each of its linked providers.

#### Scope

This outline procedure for the approval of a linked provider's quality assurance procedures applies to existing linked providers with whom UCC has already entered into arrangements with in respect of programmes of education. A procedure for establishing new linked providers will be developed as part of the Framework for Collaborative Provision.

Under the 2012 Act each Designated Awarding Body has core responsibilities concerning a linked provider:

1. To **review and approve** the linked provider quality assurance procedures and **monitor the implementation** of same;
2. To periodically **review the effectiveness** of the linked provider quality assurance procedures.

This document is concerned with the outline procedure for part 1 of the process, the approval of a linked provider's quality assurance procedures and monitoring of the implementation of the procedures.

## Outline Procedure

### 1. Approval of a linked provider's quality assurance (QA) procedures

#### 1.1 Notification

UCC to notify linked provider of their responsibility to provide their QA procedures, within a specified timeframe, under the legislation.

#### 1.2 Submission

Linked provider to submit QA procedures for institutional approval. A draft submission can be sent in advance for formative advice by the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU).

#### 1.3 Establishment of Panel

A Panel will be established with representatives from QEU, Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), Office of Academic Affairs and others as required.

#### 1.4 Panel Report

- The Panel will evaluate the submitted QA procedures for compliance against the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012*; the *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (April 2016) incorporating the *European Standards and Guidelines* (May 2015); and any relevant UCC policies.
- The Panel will write a Panel Report.
- The Panel, in their Panel Report, will either:
  - recommend the linked provider's QA procedures to the QEC;
  - or*
  - recommend the linked provider's QA procedures to QEC subject to recommendations and/or outline conditions to be met within a specified timeframe as appropriate;
  - or*
  - refuse to approve the linked provider's proposed QA procedures.
- Where the Panel makes recommendations or sets conditions, the linked provider shall take account of those recommendations/conditions before resubmitting the draft procedures for approval.

## **1.5 Outcome**

The Quality Enhancement Committee, advised by the Panel, will ultimately approve or withdraw approval of a linked provider's quality assurance procedures under Section 39 of the 2012 Act

### ***Approval***

Where UCC approves the QA procedures, the linked provider should publish their QA procedures on a publically accessible website and provide a copy of the published QA procedures to QQI. Approval of the linked provider's quality assurance procedures is not, however, an endorsement as to their "effectiveness". The review of the effectiveness of the QA procedures will be subject to a separate review exercise as required under the 2012 Act.

### ***Withdrawal of Approval***

The University reserves the right to withdraw approval of a linked providers quality assurance procedures under Section 39 of the 2012 Act. Notice of withdrawal will be forwarded to QQI.

- ***Appeal Process***

Should the linked provider wish to appeal the withdrawal of approval, an independent appeals person(s) will be appointed for the purpose of hearing an appeal under Section 39 of the 2012 Act.

## **2. Monitoring of a linked provider's quality assurance procedures**

Where a linked provider's QA procedures have been approved, the linked provider shall then implement QA procedures approved by UCC under section 33, and will, in accordance with the QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (2015) and the QQI Core statutory QA Guidelines ensure that the QA procedures are continuously reviewed and enhanced so that they remain fit-for-purpose and are appropriately aligned to institutional and public policy changes.

UCC will periodically monitor the implementation of the QA procedures by the linked provider via an annual report to be considered by the Quality Enhancement Committee.

## **3. Institutional Review**

UCC will review the effectiveness of the linked provider QA procedures established and implemented by the linked provider under section 37 of the 2012 Act. This review will be carried out in accordance with the procedures for cyclical review established by QQI. Section 37 of the 2012 Act requires a DAB to review the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures established by a linked provider: (a) at least once every 7 years, and (b) from time to time as the designated awarding body thinks appropriate.

## **Quality and Qualifications Act 2012**

### *Responsibility of a Designated Awarding Body*

Part 3 (32) - (1) Where a designated awarding body is a relevant provider to whom section 28 applies, and the designated awarding body proposes to make an award in respect of a programme of education and training of a linked provider, the designated awarding body shall, in establishing procedures under section 28, include procedures for

- (a) review by the designated awarding body of the effectiveness of procedures established by the linked provider under that section,
- (b) review by the designated awarding body of the effectiveness of the implementation by the linked provider of those procedures,
- (c) the appointment of an independent appeals person for the purposes of hearing an appeal under section 39, and
- (d) the hearing of an appeal under section 39.

### *Definition of a linked provider*

Part 1 (3) Subject to subsection (4), a linked provider is a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

(4) A provider of a programme referred to in subsection (3) is not a linked provider where the award referred to in that subsection is a joint award of the provider and the designated awarding body.