

2008 Annual report on Authority Business Plan (2008-09)

Introduction

The Authority adopted a five year Strategic Plan (2008-2012) and a two year Business Plan (2008-2009) in February 2008. These set out the direction and goals of its work, and key actions to be taken in the initial two year timeframe. The Authority executive monitors and reports on progress in achieving these goals and the implementation of the Business Plan in line with the overall arrangements agreed in 2008. One of these is an annual report on the Business Plan, to be presented to the Authority at its first meeting of each year. This details measures taken in respect of each of the action lines in the Plan and available results concerning performance indicators.

The following sections of this report set out the key achievements of the Business Plan and factors critical to them. Section I highlights the major areas of work in 2008 which are expected to have the greatest impact on the achievement of the Authority's goals. This section also reports on performance indicators for each goal in line with those identified on the Authority's Strategic Plan. Although the indicators refer to performance over the five year period achievements in relation to 2008 are reported where possible. Changes in the operational environment of the Authority in 2008 which have impacted on its work are noted. Section II reports on the action lines set out for 2008 under each of the Authority's six strategic goals. This section includes new actions taken in response to new developments.

Strategic Goals

The Authority's six strategic goals are that:

- 1. The National Framework of Qualifications is widely known, understood, used and valued in society*
- 2. The National Framework of Qualifications is more deeply implemented in a way that is open and responsive to the needs of the learner, society and the economy*
- 3. Effective and integrated pathways between qualifications operate throughout the National Framework of Qualifications*
- 4. All Framework qualifications are quality assured to the highest international standards*
- 5. Framework qualifications are fully recognised abroad and qualifications gained outside Ireland are appropriately recognised in Ireland*
- 6. The Authority, in tandem with FETAC and HETAC, are high-quality, effective and efficient state agencies.*

Section I Highlights

Summary

Overall, the action lines for 2008 set out in the Authority's Business Plan (2008-09) were achieved. The Authority also responded to new developments and challenges, foremost of which were the decline in public finances and public sector reforms (notably the OECD review and follow-up). On the one hand this led to budgetary cuts, which impacted on payroll and planning. On the other hand, in line with the overarching objective of the Authority's work to bring greater coherence and quality to the qualifications system, it led to a Government announcement to amalgamate the Authority and the awards Councils. The impact of these developments on the Authority's work in 2008 is addressed below.

The achievement of the workplan in 2008 was due to a number of factors. In many cases, the engagement of staff across the organisation as a whole was critical to success. This was evident, for example, in relation to the integration of QualifaX, and the review and closer integration of the recognitions service in the Authority's overall work. In this and other areas, the engagement of stakeholders has been critical. In 2008, this was especially evident in the wider and deeper involvement of university staff in Framework implementation. Promoting the use of the Framework in public policy and in recruitment has been resource intensive (time and personnel). Considerable efforts were undertaken by staff in 2008 to advance the use of the Framework in public recruitment. On the international front, the Authority built on its engagement in the Bologna and European Qualifications Frameworks. In all areas of its work, the Authority aims to add value, whether in relation to the recognition of qualifications or achieving greater coherence/coordination in education and training policy and funding. Effective networking with stakeholders is critical to achieving these goals.

Looking ahead to 2009, a number of activities undertaken in 2008 are expected to bear fruit. Overall, the economic downturn, further budgetary cutbacks and amalgamation and overall uncertainty are expected to impact significantly on the Authority's resources and priorities. More broadly, this is also expected to impact on stakeholder engagement with the Authority. In light of this and the outturn for 2008, the executive is reviewing its business plan for 2009.

Strategic Goal 1

The National Framework of Qualifications is widely known, understood, used and valued in society

Communications

The key action here was to develop a joint approach to communications amongst the Authority and the awards Councils. A joint approach was considered to be more effective and efficient. This was also in line with government policy on shared services. In May 2008, for the first time, the Authority, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the Further Education and Training Awards Council undertook a joint marketing campaign. This involved television advertising aimed at increasing awareness of the Framework and of the awarding bodies. The results of this included joint promotion of the National Framework of Qualifications (Framework) at the FÁS Opportunities Fair, and related press coverage by the Irish Independent, the Higher Options event, and the Ploughing Championships.

In relation to awareness and use of the Framework in employment/recruitment, the Authority's work focused largely on the public sector. It was anticipated that the use of the Framework by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) would, over time, impact on a major area of employment and could offer a lead to other areas. The work included awareness raising within the PAS and Department of Finance; teasing out the implications of the use of the Framework in relation to setting job requirements; responsibility for decision-making in relation to acceptance of a broader range of qualifications for selection/recruitment and the Authority's role in processing applications and/or giving advice. Guidelines for mainstreaming the use of the Framework in public sector recruitment were drawn up and discussions on their use took place with PAS and the Department of Finance in 2008.

Referencing the Framework in national statistics

Another key action was a joint proposal by the Authority and the Department of Education and Science (DES) to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to bring the questions on educational attainment in the Quarterly National Household Survey into line with the Framework. The CSO is expected to pilot the proposed alignment in 2009. Likewise, in response to a public submissions process on requested changes, the Authority and the DES made a joint proposal in relation to the Census of Population (scheduled for 2011) to the CSO. It is anticipated that a proposal will be piloted in spring 2009. In both cases, consultation is being carried out by the CSO with other stakeholders and, in relation to the Census in particular, it will be considered in line with other proposals for change. If achieved, this referencing would have the effect, for the first time, of enabling national data to be collected on the basis of Framework levels. This would support wider use of the Framework in public policy.

SG1 Performance Indicators

Public awareness of the Framework, as measured by surveys, which will also demonstrate the extent of the public understanding of the Framework.

Face-to-face market survey (Millward Brown) of 1000 adults (2008) demonstrated that 32% of all adults surveyed had heard of the Framework. Awareness levels were highest amongst students (48%) and those who had recently completed an education/training course. The fan diagram was seen by 25% of those surveyed. Awareness was higher in particular regions (Dublin and Connaught/Ulster at 42% and 43% respectively). Awareness of FETAC was at 61% and that of HETAC at 41% of respondents.

This survey compares with one (by Lansdowne Market Research) carried out in 2006, following a radio and press advertising campaign by the Authority. At that time, awareness of the Framework stood at 18% of those surveyed. Awareness levels were highest amongst those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (as was reported in the 2008 survey).

Awareness survey concerning the Higher Options Conference (NQAI in-house), September 2008. Of 234 surveys completed, 22% had heard of the NFQ and 50% had seen the Framework diagram. At the Ploughing Championships, September 2008, of 545 surveyed, 36% had heard of the Framework and 27% had seen the fan diagram. In relation to FETAC, over 80% of respondents at both events had heard of FETAC, and 31% (Higher Options) and 44% (Ploughing Championships) had heard of HETAC.

Use of the Framework in public policies and funding mechanisms (work to identify and develop appropriate detailed measures of this will be completed in the course of this Plan).

The HEA's proposal (2008) for a new strategic, performance-based model of funding for higher education institutions set out four goals, amongst which was teaching and learning. Within the latter, it proposed that higher education institutions will have to demonstrate that programme, module/unit/course descriptors should be written, and aligned with Framework descriptors and that credit should be allocated in line with the national approach to credit in higher education and training developed by the Authority

The second cycle of the Strategic Innovation Fund, incorporated Framework implementation as one of the six national priorities for higher education. A number of projects financed in the second cycle address this: a) DCU and IADT (within the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance) project on enhancement of learning; b) GMIT led project with NUI Galway on continuous curriculum development focusing on the implementation of the Bologna process and the NFQ; c) Institute of Technology Carlow led project on learner assessment, and d) Limerick Institute of Technology led project on progression for craft persons on the NFQ.

Student Support Bill (published February 2008) provides a single statutory basis for all student grants, replacing four existing ones. For the purposes of the Bill, the Minister is to have regard to whether a course is leading to a recognised qualification

(defined in Framework terms within Ireland and in parallel terms for outside Ireland) in prescribing a course. Amongst proposed amendments to the Bill is a provision that, should such funding be available, support in relation to part-time provision would be conditional on programmes leading to a major award in the Framework.

Since 2007, FÁS has provided support for programmes/courses in line with the extent to which they lead to Framework awards. Pending the development of the FETAC common awards system, there is no requirement that providers seeking FÁS support must offer courses/programmes leading to Framework awards. Skillnets is also moving to link funding to programmes that lead to Framework qualifications. It was reported (May 2008 annual Skillnets conference) that 35% of training it provided was linked to the Framework.

Referencing of the Framework in national education and training statistics.

Joint DES/NQAI proposals made to Central Statistics Office, 2008, to reference the Framework in the Quarterly National Household Statistics (QNHS) and in the next Census of Population (2011).

Referencing of the Framework in key information sources of education and training providers.

Not available.

Use of Framework learning outcomes by regulators of professional practice.

There is no requirement for regulators to consult with the Authority in relation to their use of learning outcomes or the Framework. The Authority and HETAC have been approached by regulators in relation to the interpretation and use of Framework learning outcomes and/or inclusion of awards they make or recognise in the Framework (e.g. architects). Certain regulators are examining their potential value to them. Fáilte Ireland used NFQ to identify curriculum areas and learning outcomes that could be used to develop awards. In a number of newly regulated areas of work e.g. building energy rating, the qualification necessary for entry to a register of practice is identified as a particular Framework award. Providers who offer programmes must have national accreditation through the Framework. The private security industry and authority also uses the Framework in developing programmes and qualifications relevant to the sector.

The establishment of an effective national information database on all awards in the Framework and programmes leading to them

See actions taken in relation to QualifaX (SG 6), the national learners' database. QualifaX carries comprehensive information on about 18,000 programmes/courses offered in Ireland. The website had 24m hits in 2007 and 8.1 m in January 2008 (time of peak usage).

The Authority website hosts lists of awards made by professional bodies and international bodies which are included or aligned with the NFQ. The awards made by UK VET awarding bodies that are not aligned but which are offered in Ireland are separately identified on the websites and are also reflected in QualifaX.

Strategic Goal 2

The National Framework of Qualifications is more deeply implemented in a way that is open and responsive to the needs of the learner, society and the economy

Universities and wider higher education issues

A major area of work was in relation to university engagement with the Framework. The executive worked intensively with the universities to include their non-major awards in the Framework and to deepen Framework implementation across the sector in the long-term.

In a first strand of work, each of the seven universities worked to identify and verify the level and award-type of their non-major awards, articulate learning outcomes and to ascribe credit and apply naming conventions. In June, they provided individual listings of these awards in the Framework, via the Irish Universities Association (IUA), to the Authority. These showed that, the universities had assigned credit and a Framework level to the majority of their awards. The lists contain differences in credit ranges and naming conventions for awards. Work is continuing with the universities on the full completion of these lists as well as with the National University of Ireland in relation to awards made via the colleges that it recognises and awards made by their associated colleges. Work is on-going to ensure that the universities will, in due course, publish both their major and non-major award listings. The credit and naming conventions issues will be taken up with universities and other stakeholders in 2009. It is noted that this work, critical to the full implementation of the Framework in the universities, has necessarily taken time to complete and is largely dependent on the continued engagement of the universities.

A second strand of work, involving planning and support from the executive, concerns the universities Framework implementation network, established in 2007. Its purpose is to bring together practitioners from the universities and linked colleges to exchange experience in the use of the Framework and to support implementation. The IUA and the executive provide a joint secretariat to it.¹ This is largely a bottom-up approach with the aim of teasing out implementation issues and, in the long-term, supporting wide ownership of the Framework in the sector.

Beyond this, the executive has worked to achieve consistency and effective coordination between the Framework and other areas of higher education policy and practice. It worked with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to link the activities of the Bologna experts programme with those of the Framework implementation network and the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN). This included joint organisation of Bologna programme events, for example, a seminar on the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (June 2008). The links between the Framework and the Bologna framework are also promoted in these networks.

The Authority executive continued to act as joint secretary to the IHEQN in 2008. The network met four times in the year. Its main areas of work were: follow up to quality improvement recommendations from quality reviews; student involvement in

¹ Three working groups have been established within the network (on titling, quality assurance, inclusion of awards, the assessment of learning outcomes and designing discipline specific learning outcomes).

quality review; the code of practice and guidelines for Irish higher education institutions in relation to the provision of education to international students; and the development of common principles relating to external examining. In relation to the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), of which the Authority's chief executive is a board member, the executive made a submission to its quality review.

The context for Authority engagement with the IUQB shifted in late 2008 with the announcement that the external quality review of the universities, which is one of the functions of IUQB, will be included in the newly amalgamated body (of the three agencies).

Alignment of awards of international bodies

In February, the first set of awards made by international awarding bodies in Ireland was aligned with the Framework. This concerns a) 201 awards currently made in Ireland by the Open University (OU) across Framework levels 6-10 and b) seven awards currently made by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), at Framework levels 4,5, and 6. SQA plans to make these awards in Ireland in the future. The OU application took a year to process, partly as it was the first such application and also because of the information requirements posed to the OU. HETAC processed the OU application and FETAC the SQA one. As a condition of alignment, from 2009 on, both bodies will report annually on quality assurance issues and on the number of learners registering and achieving such awards. Currently some 1000 learners achieve OU awards each year in Ireland.

In October, certain awards made by nine UK vocational education and training awarding bodies to learners in Ireland were aligned with the Framework. This followed a resolution to the difficulty that the quality assurance arrangements for these awards did not 'travel' to Ireland. A protocol agreed with the UK regulatory bodies in 2008 means that quality assurance arrangements for awards included in UK frameworks will apply to those awards when made in Ireland. The executive worked closely with HETAC and FETAC to process applications. As a result, a total of 1,046 awards from bodies including City and Guilds, Edexcel, London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and the Institute of Leadership and Management were aligned. Given the different construction of some of these awards to Framework awards i.e. the use of Guided Learning Hours, the awards are aligned to a Framework level rather than award-type, and information of Guided Learning Hours will be made available to learners in Ireland.

An important condition of alignment is the publication of the lists of aligned awards on the Authority website, on-going monitoring of quality review arrangements and the publication of annual statistics regarding learner take-up of such awards.

SG 2 Performance Indicators

The use of Framework learning outcomes in programmes leading to Framework qualifications

- Dublin City University's new academic framework for innovation includes a requirement to describe awards in accordance with NFQ (on-going since mid-2008)
- Learning outcomes identified as an area for work in a number of Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) projects (second round of funding announced in 2008 – see SG1 performance indicator)

The use of Framework learning outcomes in relation to the assessment of learning achievements

Comprehensive national-level information not available

The extent to which professional and international qualifications are recognised through the Framework

One indicator of this is the alignment of awards of international bodies with the Framework. In 2008:

- 201 awards currently made by the Open University (and 3 legacy awards) were aligned
- 7 awards to be made by Scottish Qualifications Authority were aligned
- 1, 046 awards of UK vocational education and training bodies were aligned.

Data on learner registration and attainment of these awards will be made available on an annual basis, beginning in 2009.

Availability of awards at all levels of the Framework

Comprehensive national-level data not available

Extent to which in-company training leads to awards in the Framework

Data not available.

Strategic Goal 3

Effective and integrated pathways between qualifications operate throughout the National Framework of Qualifications

While a range of actions impinge on the development of pathways between qualifications, the main focus of the Authority's work in 2008 was on craft progression.

Craft progression

This work involved discussions and actions with the main stakeholders (including FAS, the institutes of technology, HETAC, FETAC and the HEA). In late 2007, the executive convened the main stakeholders to jointly consider ways to improve progression. The group met twice in 2008 and focused its attention on identifying and publicising existing pathways. To this end, FETAC identified and published a brochure on existing pathways from the advanced certificate craft (level 5) into higher education and training programmes (levels 6, 7 and 8) offered by the Institutes of Technology. This shows the routes operating between 23 specific crafts and specific programmes, the applications process, any additional entry requirements and details of exemptions. It also shows general entry routes from any crafts programme into higher education and training programmes (which are offered by seven institutes of technology). This work underlined the importance of regular updating and publicising of information to learners. It also showed some inconsistency in the recognition of Advanced Craft- certificate awards for advanced entry. This will be taken up by the Authority and awards Councils in 2009.

A further strand of work is being carried out as part of a Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) project (begun in 2007) by six institutes of technology. The major output of this work in 2008 was the publication of a 'Framework for craft progression' which advises learners, employers and higher education providers on overall progression routes to allow holders of Advanced certificates – Craft to progress to level 7 degree programmes. This publication provided survey results which demonstrated the interest of apprentices in progression to a higher qualification (95% of over 1 000 surveyed); and of employers in further learning for craft persons. The framework outlines a means by which Advanced Certificate- Craft holders could be afforded advanced entry to programmes - based on a consideration of learning outcomes - and any exemptions or additional prerequisites that might apply. Beyond this, more diverse delivery options could be developed. The framework includes recommendations concerning the widespread availability of information on progression opportunities to craft holders and apprentices; institutional collaboration to develop new routes, flexible learning opportunities and financial support to craftspersons pursuing higher education options. Overall, from a qualifications perspective, this work underlined the value and impact of adopting a learning outcomes approach to progression. While the development of pathways into higher education and training remains a key issue in progression, the rapid downturn in the economy in 2008 led to significant lay-offs of existing apprentices. This created an urgent need to find ways to allow those apprentices complete their training and achieve the relevant craft qualification or recognition for learning already achieved. This would have a major bearing on their ability to find employment. The institutes of technology and FAS, in the first instance, addressed this issue in 2008. The Councils will be involved in this work in 2009. Moreover, the deterioration in the public finances also impacted, in late 2008, on the

consideration of public funding of new initiatives to achieve progression. New funding is very unlikely to be available in 2009. Also, the Departments wish to see a re-focusing of efforts on providing education to those most at risk of losing their jobs.

SG 3 Performance Indicators

Increase in progression by holders of major awards at Framework levels 4, 5 and 6 as measured by increases in progression routes and the number of learners using these.

There is lack of data on the progression of learners, in part due to the unavailability, at a national level, of detailed data on the level of qualifications of entrants into higher education and training programmes and data protection issues which limit the sharing of data between different bodies. On progression routes, the FETAC brochure on progression from craft awards (2008) identifies routes operating between 23 specific crafts and specific programmes. In addition, seven institutes of technology operate a range of routes for all crafts persons into higher education and training programmes

Implementation of Action Plan for the Recognition of Prior Learning

Work to advance this to be completed in 2009

Strategic Goal 4

All Framework qualifications are quality assured to the highest international standards

FETAC Quality Review

Aside from the continuing secretarial support to the IHEQN (see above), the major piece of work in 2008 was the completion of the quality review of FETAC by the Authority. The review was developmental in intent and concerned with developing and enhancing a quality culture in the Council.

The report of the external panel was presented to the Authority in late 2007. This commended FETAC on significant progress in its work since its establishment and found that it carried out its statutory functions satisfactorily. It contained a number of recommendations, including for the streamlining of procedures for developing awards, speeding up the pace of policy implementation, strengthening ties with industry, taking account of the diversity of its providers and working with HETAC to resolve the confusion around level 6 awards. These recommendations were addressed by FETAC in its response to the review and in its Strategic Plan (2008-2010). The Authority concurred with the review panel's findings and FETAC's follow-up to them. It noted the priority given to ensuring that FETAC has the capacity to deliver on its plans and the testing of a range of approaches to standard-setting as well as the establishment of an industry forum. It also welcomed the publication by FETAC of its response and its intention to report on its achievement in early 2009. Related to this, the Authority discussed bilaterally and through the tripartite structures, FETAC's strategic plan (2008-2010). In February 2008, the Authority formally approved this Plan.

HETAC Quality Review

In relation to HETAC, its follow-up report to the quality review completed in 2006 was discussed by it and the Authority executive in April 2008. It was noted that internal staff developments had impacted on this as had the deteriorating budgetary position within HETAC. The key issues being addressed concerned planning and training for institutional reviews and the recruitment of reviewers. It is noted that discussions on a new strategic plan were to commence following the appointment of a new HETAC Chief Executive.

Amalgamation and quality assurance

Quality assurance arrangements in higher education are part of the discussions on the amalgamation of the Authority and the awards Councils, announced by the Government in October 2008. The amalgamation also includes the transfer of the external quality review function of the universities, currently performed by the IUQB, to the new body. This will include consideration of membership of ENQA and of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), established as part of the Bologna process.

SG 4 Performance Indicators

Attitudes of stakeholders, in particular employers, to Framework qualifications as measured by surveys

See details of in-house surveys, 2008 (SG 1)

Effectiveness of FETAC, HETAC, and the IUQB and their associated institutions, as well as the DIT as measured by quality reviews

Quality reviews of HETAC (2006), FETAC (2008) and IUQB (2008) found that they each carried out their functions and that they complied with the relevant international standards.

Strategic Goal 5

Framework qualifications are fully recognised abroad and qualifications gained outside Ireland are appropriately recognised in Ireland

European Qualifications Framework

The executive continued its close engagement in the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which was formally adopted in 2008. The Authority participated in the EQF Advisory Board and in a sub-committee, set up in early 2008, to elaborate criteria and procedures for the referencing of national frameworks/qualifications levels with the EQF. In this regard, the Authority executive supported an approach modelled on that agreed for the Bologna framework. This is the general thrust of the approach, which was agreed by the sub-committee in late 2008. It is expected to be agreed by the EQF Advisory group in early 2009. There was also spin-off work arising from the EQF engagement and Ireland's status in Europe as a 'first-mover' in relation to a national qualifications framework. The executive was invited to speak to key national conferences on framework development (Germany and Austria) and to provide an external expert on the alignment of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework to the EQF. In addition, the development of the EQF and the related referencing of national qualifications levels are expected to impact on the existing understandings of the relationship between the Irish NFQ and the various UK qualifications frameworks. In light of this, the Authority agreed to invite an expert on the UK qualifications system to be a member of the National Steering Committee for referencing the Irish Framework to the EQF. The overall membership of the committee and the use of the draft EQF advisory group criteria and procedures as a basis for referencing were also agreed by the Authority in December 2008.

Recognition Service

An internal review and reorganisation of the Authority's recognition service was undertaken in 2008. This responded to the findings of the Authority Quality review and internal re-organisation. It aimed to fully integrate (and support) the service with that of developing the Framework and promoting the recognition of qualifications at home and abroad. The review covered all aspects of the service – including the nature, extent and value of the advice provided, detailed operational procedures, the effectiveness of interactions with stakeholders, building and managing knowledge and practical ways to improve efficiency. It also involved significant work to ensure compliance with data protection requirements. It involved the whole organisation and significant contributions from all staff throughout 2008. The key achievements in the period were:

- phasing out the Qualifications Recognition Ireland brand
- inclusion of greater information on the Framework and more clarity in the recognition advice given to applicants
- completion of country profiles (for seven countries) and updating of existing ones.
- faster turnaround time for processing of applications (five working days) where country profiles exist
- steps taken to ensure compliance of all aspects of the service with data protection requirements
- revised application forms and template for advice, improved methods of processing applications

- Recognition website re-organised and updated
- assessment and processing of higher education applications taken over from HETAC
- new arrangements to achieve greater consistency in advice given in relation to school awards
- new arrangements concerning interaction with Public Appointments Service
- conference with admissions officers from higher education institutions (November 2008), the first of its kind, to promote the service, develop relations with institutions and achieve greater consistency and efficiency amongst the bodies involved in giving recognition advice
- steps to implement new IT system to manage workflows more efficiently and to make processing of applications more efficient

The outcomes of the review, and continued monitoring and streamlining of the service, have led to greater effectiveness, consistency and efficiency. A number of practical steps to enhance the service were identified at the conference with admissions officers. These and a more detailed review of the developments in 2008 are presented in a separate report on the Recognitions Service.

SG 5 Performance Indicators

Enhanced economic returns as a result of the appropriate recognition of international qualifications of individuals in Ireland as measured by national research

Access to education and training for holders of international qualifications

The above indicators will be reported on, where research results are available, in the future. The Authority does not have the resources to undertake such research and does not itself gather statistics on learners. Note that an OECD survey of the experience of migrant students in education and training is planned for 2009 (Department of Education and Science).

Alignment of the Framework with the European Qualifications Framework

Approach to referencing agreed in 2008, referencing to be achieved in 2009

The value of the Qualifications Recognition service as measured by stakeholder/client feedback.

One of the follow-up actions agreed at the November conference with higher education admissions officers, was for them to provide feedback on the Irish education system on the recognition website

In 2008, a total of 13 applications for a re-assessment of recognitions advice were received. Nine of these were processed, and advice was amended in six cases mainly as a result of additional information being provided.

Additional measures of performance:

Availability of certificate supplements – 22 certificate supplements relating to crafts/trades were developed by FETAC in 2008. These are published on its website. Work on certificate supplements for other awards is continuing

Diploma supplement – a survey (jointly undertaken by HETAC and Authority) of the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in higher education institutions (2008) showed that of 43 respondents, 75% of them issued diploma supplements in 2008. Where these were not issued, technical/information technology issues were cited as the main obstacle.

Strategic Goal 6

The Authority, in tandem with FETAC and HETAC, are high-quality, effective and efficient state agencies.

The major achievements were in the area of tripartite work with FETAC and HETAC, on the one hand and, on the other, the integration of QualifaX into the Authority. Tripartite cooperation was given added impetus in late 2008 by the Government decision to amalgamate the three agencies. In addition, the three agencies worked individually and jointly to achieve budgetary savings in 2008 in the light of cutbacks in their revenue. The Authority made significant savings in payroll and achieved efficiencies in communications expenditure. On-going and planned expenditure were monitored and reviewed more frequently in the second half of 2008 in the light of overall cutbacks in, and uncertainty about, expenditure.

Tripartite work

Cooperation is formalised through regular meetings at senior executive level. This work is in addition to the regular collaboration between the agencies on issues such as the processing of applications for alignment/inclusion of international awards and on international issues. Meetings in 2008 resulted in joint agreements on budgetary matters (ways to meet reductions in budgetary allocations, fees and to address pensions), decentralisation, a joint approach to communications and marketing and a support service for providers. Areas considered jointly were the development of an Industry Forum, links between business systems, and issues that arise jointly in relation to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Department of Education and Science. This work contributed to government objectives regarding achieving shared services and public sector reform. In relation to the former, cooperative arrangements are in place with a wider set of education agencies.

The announcement, October 2008, of the amalgamation of the three agencies placed this work in a new context and gave it renewed impetus. In addition, the decision to include within the new body the external quality review of the universities (carried out by the IUQB) reinforced the underlying approach to the tripartite work of bringing about greater coherence in the qualifications and quality assurance systems in the further and higher education and training sectors. Since then, the tripartite structure had focused more closely on amalgamation issues and planning for that.

QualifaX

In January 2008, QualifaX, with a staff of seven, joined the Authority. The vision behind this was to promote wide understanding, use and value of the Framework through a high-quality information database for learners on qualifications. The major actions in 2008 were to integrate staff, to develop the QualifaX database and leverage it in the Authority's wider work. Staff across the organisation worked jointly to agree an approach to the future direction of QualifaX. Following consultation, arrangements were put in place to manage the work and engage with key stakeholders (an Advisory Group of the Authority and Institute of Guidance Counsellors; an internal executive group; and a Consultative Group representing almost 20 stakeholders). Key objectives for 2008 concerned greater choice for learners, accurate referencing of the Framework, high quality information and continued operational efficiency.

During the year, the executive followed up on a request by the DETE to reconvene discussions between the main bodies on the National Learning Line. Later, as funding for this became unavailable, this action was halted and the focus shifted to developing QualifaX as the national information database. One of the (unanticipated) impacts of this and the incorporation of QualifaX in the Authority was that third party providers of information to learners saw greater benefits in sharing information/data feeds with QualifaX. This led to requests for formal arrangements. The Authority, considering the mutual benefit of such arrangements, determined an overall approach to developing such arrangements and possible charges that might apply. The latter reflected the considerable resource issues involved. Data feeds with Fáilte Ireland and Education Ireland were established in 2008.

Overall, the major achievements in 2008 were to:

- establish links with and views of major stakeholders on the information database
- include information, for the first time, on FÁS courses in QualifaX
- improve QualifaX user interface
- review the accuracy of information (on-going)
- explore and agree an approach to sharing data feeds with third parties including charges that might apply (feeds established in 2008 with Fáilte Ireland and Education Ireland, other organisations have requested them)
- update QualifaX to reflect the increasing number of awards recognised through the Framework e.g. all Open University awards in the Framework are reflected in QualifaX
- plans to re-design QualifaX website drawn up and to be implemented in 2009, resources permitting

The overall impact of these actions has been to improve the quality and reach of QualifaX. The database is proving to be a critical tool in informing learner choice and in promoting the Framework.

SG 6 Performance Indicators

Effectiveness of the Authority, FETAC and HETAC as measured by quality reviews

Quality reviews of HETAC (2006) and FETAC (2008) found that they carried out their functions and that they complied with the relevant international standards.

Higher human resource standards in the Authority as measured by the Excellence Through People award

Achieved Excellence Through People award, December 2008 (valid until 2010)

Customer satisfaction with Authority operations as measured by feedback

Feedback forms introduced for Authority events (used for NARIC seminar, December 2008)

Compliance with data protection requirements

Internal data protection audit carried out in 2007. Substantial action taken in 2008 to address shortfalls identified in audit

Effective financial management systems as measured by internal audits and audits of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Annual internal audit (PWC) completed – found full compliance with requirements. This confirmed that shortfalls identified in 2007 were fully addressed.

Annual internal audit (PWC) of financial controls completed – found full compliance with requirements and that effective controls are in place. Report noted that nine issues identified in 2007 report for action were addressed.

Annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General completed – found full compliance with requirements and that three risks identified in 2007 report were addressed

Value for Money audit (2007) demonstrated that measures were in place to achieve this. Project Initiation Documents introduced for all executive business in 2008 which address value for money/resources.

Section II Achievement of action lines, 2008

BUSINESS PLAN 2008-09

Key:

SG - Strategic Goal;

Key performance indicators refer to deliverables identified for the Plan. Achievement of these and other actions taken in 2008 are reported in the table.

Target dates refer to a) completion by end of the specified year; b) ongoing over 2008-09 or c) continuing beyond the period 2008-09

Items in blue refer to activities to be undertaken in 2009

	<i>Key Deliverables to end 2009</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicators and actions achieved in 2008</i>	<i>Target Date</i>	<i>Target met Yes/No</i>	<i>Critical success factors</i>	<i>If target is not met, actions taken to address this and/or issues affecting this</i>
SG1 <i>Highlight 2008</i>	NFQ is widely known, understood, used and valued in society <i>Joint communication and marketing Referencing Framework in national stats</i>					
SG1/01	Joint communication and marketing awareness campaign (Authority and Councils)	Joint marketing awareness campaign effectively implemented <i>- achieved</i>	2008	Y	Senior-level engagement of three agencies Availability of funding	
		Awareness levels assessed post campaign <i>-achieved</i>	2008	Y		
SG1/02	Joint participation in marketing events	Joint participation in marketing events.	On-going	Y	Engagement of staff of three agencies Availability of funding	
		Key events 2008: - FÁS Opportunities, Feb	2008	Y		
		- Higher Options, Sept	2008	Y		

		- Ploughing Championships, Sept IGC Conference, Mar	2008 2009	On target	
SG1/03	Map NFQ references in key information sources (and ATP) in the universities, DIT, IT's, private colleges etc.	Mapping exercise <i>completed</i>	2007	Y	
SG1/04	Develop and implement approach to ensure all Education and training information sources correctly reference the NFQ	See SG2/12			
SG1/05	Promote awareness and use of NFQ in awarding bodies/providers	See SG1/10			
SG1/06	Develop and implement awareness strategy for targeting learners	See SG2/12 See SG1/01 See SG1/10			
SG1/07	Develop approach to promote awareness and use of the NFQ and Recognition amongst learners/employer bodies/recruiters, PAS/Foreign nationals/E&T Providers (incl Community & Voluntary sector) and User Guides	See SG1/10 See SG2/12 Guidelines for mainstreaming public sector recruitment agreed by Department of Finance	Concluding 2009	On target	Involvement of PAS staff and Department of Finance; significant engagement of Authority staff; joint commitment to seek consistency in recognition of qualifications and to achieve efficiencies
		PAS referencing and using NFQ in campaigns. In 2008: - Steps taken by PAS to use Framework	Concluding 2009	On target	

		- Authority advises PAS on recruitment			
SG1/08	Organise biannual NFQ conference	Conference completed	2009	On target	
SG1/09	Continue work with FAS in developing the use of NFQ	At least one project initiated and underway with FÁS to assist with promoting awareness and use of the framework. - <i>achieved</i> .(project concerns use of NFQ by FÁS Employment Services Support Unit)	On-going	On target	
SG1/10	Develop approach to promote awareness and use of the NFQ amongst recruiter bodies	Updated Communication plan in place (<i>achieved</i>) – top 500 recruiting bodies contacted, Oct 2008	2008	Y	
SG1/11	Implement agreed approach to promote awareness and use of the NFQ within the public service through PAS	See SG1/7			
SG1/12	Assess the existing data/stats sets and work with Gov Depts/agencies to ensure data can effectively provide info on NFQ utility	See SG1/14 Work carried out with CSO and DES to reference NFQ in statistics on educational attainment in QNHS	On-going	On target	

		- proposal for referencing developed, 2008				
		NFQ referenced in Census of Pop. 2011 - proposal for referencing developed, 2008	Concluding 2011	On target		
SG1/13	Identify and implement measures to assess employers, learners, and other groupings on awareness, knowledge and understanding of NFQ	Assessment measures implemented	2009			
SG1/14	Work with data collecting agencies to streamline/cross reference E&T classifications used to make them more compatible with the NFQ, incl. scoping of project CSO, ISCED	Quarterly national Household Survey to allow for dissemination of education level by NFQ – see SG1/12	On-going	Y		
SG1/15	Develop and implement approach to ensure national statistical information correctly reference the NFQ	See SG1/14 In 2008, on-going liaison with FÁS SLMRU	On-going	On target		
SG1/16	Liaise with DES and HEA and DETE on the use of the NFQ in E&T funding mechanisms	NFQ is used in funding mechanisms where appropriate In 2008: Student support Bill; HEA recurrent funding; FÁS and Skillnets funding	On-going	On target	Buy-in from key funding and policy bodies	

SG1/17	Develop and implement measures to monitor use of NFQ and qualifications by Gov Depts and agencies in funding and policy	Identify current policy and funding practice and identify impact on NFQ use.	Continuing	On target		
SG1/18	Work with Expert Group on Future Skills Needs on use of NFQ in national skills strategy	Ongoing engagement with EGFSN/DETE	2009	On target		
SG2	NFQ is more deeply implemented in a way that is open and responsive to the needs of the learner, society and the economy					
<i>Highlight 2008</i>	<i>Universities and wider higher education policy</i> <i>Alignment of international awards</i>					
SG2/1	Commence and complete Framework Implementation and Impact Study	Synthesis report, recommendations completed and consideration of follow up actions by Authority In 2008, completion of four sectoral reports, case studies, Authority paper. Consultative Forum held Nov. 2008	2009	On target	Engagement of awards Councils, NCCA and IUA, external panel and stakeholder engagement in Forum	
SG2/2	Complete process for inclusion of universities' awards	Major Diploma and non-major awards included in the Framework (apart from teaching	2008	Y	Engagement of individual universities and IUA	

		qualifications) In 2008, majority of major Diploma and non-major awards included in the Framework, and process in place to identify and include remainder.				
SG2/3	Support and coordinate the development of FIN	Continuing to act as joint secretary with IUA (<i>achieved, 2008</i>) Coordination of activities, where possible, with those of IHEQN (<i>achieved, 2008</i>)	Ongoing	Y	Commitment from and engagement of staff and staff from universities, associated colleges and IUA	
SG2/4	Support and contribute to projects from FIN	Development of three projects around: - Learning Outcomes - Assessment - Technical aspects of design of programmes for inclusion in the NFQ	Ongoing	Y		
SG2/5	Develop supplementary policy approach for inclusion of legacy awards of universities	Supplementary policy approach agreed In 2008, outline policy	2008	N		Progress this awaited the completion of the process to include

		approach drafted and under discussion with IUA				non-major awards in the Framework, which took more time than anticipated
SG2/6	Agree with each university a process and schedule for inclusion of legacy awards	Agreement with universities on implementation of supplementary policy approach	2009	On target		
SG2/7	Encourage and support coordinated initiatives in the context of tripartite	See SG 6/1-4b	Ongoing	Y		
SG2/8	Frame terms of reference for project to compare learning outcomes of awards at Levels 4 and 5	Terms of reference agreed (<i>achieved, Sept 2008</i>)	2008	Y		
SG2/9	Coordinate completion of project SG2/8		2009	On target		
SG2/10	Complete process for inclusion of legacy awards by DES	Remainder of legacy awards included in the Framework In 2008, DES produced internal draft document setting out the proposed placement of junior and senior trade certificates	2008	N	Commitment of DES, as the awarding body, in order to secure the inclusion of these awards.	Progress dependent on completion of initial work by DES
SG2/11	Process applications professional and international awarding bodies for	Pilot project for alignment of international	2008	Y	Engagement of third parties and of awards	

	inclusion and alignment	awards completed <i>(achieved)</i> . Oct 2008, awards of 9 VET awarding bodies aligned			Councils	
		Other international and professional body applications dealt with on an ongoing basis <i>(achieved 2008)</i> . June 2008, alignment of certain awards made by Open University and Scottish Qualifications Authority	Ongoing			
SG2/12	Develop and publish user guides for specific audiences	Approach to User Guide development in place <i>(achieved)</i>	On-going	Y		Future guides to be considered in context of amalgamation
		Draft Marketing Officer user Guide <i>(achieved)</i>		Y		
		Draft HE programme design user guide completed <i>(achieved)</i>		Y		
		Plan in place for development of User Guides in 2009 <i>(under review, 2008)</i>		Y		

		Two user guides have been prepared for publication (<i>achieved</i>). These guides are to be web-based and require design input. Design will be carried out in budget year 2009		Y		
SG2/13	Through Framework implementation projects promote use of learning outcomes throughout system	See SG2/4 See SG2/12	On-going	Y		
SG2/14	Continue international engagement on learning outcomes, in particular through European Commission's Cluster Group on recognition of learning outcomes	Participate in cluster group meetings and contribute to outputs (<i>achieved</i>) Cluster group supports implementation of EQF. In 2008, Ireland advised a significant number of member states on framework development processes.	Ongoing	Y		
SG2/15	In the context of deepening implementation of the Framework promote cross sectoral consistency in use	Consistency in higher education naming conventions In 2008, - actions clarified on the	Ongoing	Y		

SG2/16	Seek to establish a support service to enable providers engage with awarding bodies	<p>basis of university listings of non-major awards (SG2/2) - decision taken to convene technical advisory group on naming conventions</p> <p>Continued encouragement of discussions between DETE and DES on this issue</p>	Ongoing		Joint agreement with funding bodies on appropriate support mechanisms and availability of funding	Financial constraints will inhibit this development
SG3	Effective and integrated pathways between qualifications operate throughout the NQF					
<i>Highlight 2008</i>	<i>Craft progression</i>					
SG3/1	Broaden progression opportunities and make them transparent for holders of awards at levels 4,5,6	<p>See SG2/8</p> <p>Publication of FETAC brochure on craft progression opportunities in IOT sector (<i>achieved</i>)</p> <p>Leadership of craft progression coordination group (<i>achieved</i>)</p>	Ongoing		Stakeholder engagement, availability of funding for any new initiatives	

SG3/2	Complete OECD project on recognition of non-formal and informal learning	<p>Liaison with SIF project on craft progression (<i>achieved</i>)</p> <p>Report of OECD visit and recommendations (<i>achieved</i>)</p> <p>IN 2008, participation in OECD country group meeting</p>	2008	Y	Engagement of OECD team and Advisory Group	
SG3/3	Develop national action plan for recognition of prior learning	National action plan devised in consultation with stakeholders	2009	On target		
SG3/4	Promote use of credit as transfer and accumulation tool	<p>See SG2/15</p> <p>Briefings for higher education institutions (<i>achieved</i>)</p> <p>In 2008, process of completing university listings of non-major awards identified a need to convene technical advisory group on credit and naming conventions</p>	Ongoing			
SG3/5	Engage in international policy discussions on ECTS developments	<p>As required</p> <p>Contribute to European Commission's consultation on revised</p>	Ongoing			

SG3/6	Support FETAC's engagement on ECVET developments	ECTS Users' Guide (<i>achieved</i>) Provision of support as required (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
SG3/7	Participate in and contribute to HEA's advisory group on Access	Participation in and contribution to HEA access advisory group and national approach to access (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
SG3/8	Develop and publish user guide for ATP	ATP User Guide completed See SG2/12	2009			
SG4	All Framework qualifications are quality assured to the highest standards					
Highlight 2008	<i>FETAC Quality Review Amalgamation and quality assurance</i>					
SG4/1	Complete review of FETAC	Complete review (<i>achieved</i>)			Engagement of FETAC and External Panel	
SG4/2	Monitor follow through on FETAC review outcomes	Initiate discussions with Council and report back to Authority as per agreed approach (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
SG4/3	Monitor follow through on HETAC review outcomes	Initiate discussions with Council and report back to Authority as per agreed approach (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			

SG4/4	Perform statutory functions in relation to the delegation by Councils to providers of authority to make awards	Performing these functions in a timely manner as and when required (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing		
SG4/5	Provide secretarial support the IHEQN	Provision of ongoing secretarial support to the network - provided, 2008	Ongoing	Y	Continued support is contingent on current staff levels remaining the same
SG4/6	Participate in projects initiated by the IHEQN	Participation in a range of working groups including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Follow-through on quality review recommendations ○ Student involvement in quality assurance ○ Principles for external examining (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing	Y	
SG4/7	Monitor follow through on DIT review outcomes	Assess and respond to DIT annual reporting mechanisms to Authority, includes monitoring of follow-through on review outcomes & consideration of findings arising from QA procedures (<i>achieved</i>)	Annual	Y	

SG4/8	Consider annually the findings arising from the application by DIT of its quality assurance procedures	See SG4/7	Annual		
SG4/9	Engage internationally in QA developments through ENQA and INQAAHE	Ongoing appropriate engagement (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing		
SG4/10	Support FETAC's involvement in ENQA VET	Provision of support as required (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing		
SG4/11	Monitor integration of Framework in QA arrangements of awarding bodies and providers	See SG4/4/5/6 In 2008, promotion of integration of Framework in QA arrangements with QA agencies in context of IHEQN and in discussions on amalgamation	Ongoing		
SG4/12	On establishment of Education Ireland promote Framework and QA arrangements	Promotion of Framework and QA with Education Ireland as and when it is developed In 2008, on-going contact maintained	To be determined		Action discontinued as Education Ireland will not be established.

SG5	Framework qualifications are fully recognised abroad and qualifications gained outside Ireland are appropriately recognised in Ireland					
Highlight 2008	European Qualifications Framework Recognition Service					
SG5/1	Participate in EQF Advisory Board	Participation in EQF Advisory Group and sub-group on criteria and procedures for referencing and on steering committee for EQF platform (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing	Y	On-going effective engagement by Authority in EQF work, engagement with national and international stakeholders, positive perceptions of NFQ and EQF	
SG5/2	Develop and agree terms of reference for a process to align Irish NFQ with EQF	Terms of reference agreed (<i>achieved, Sept</i>)	2008	Y		
SG5/3	Complete alignment of NFQ to EQF	NFQ aligned with the EQF	2009	On target		
SG5/4	Participation on EQF Leonardo Project	Completion of project in collaboration with partners	2010	On target		
SG5/5	Engagement in ENIC-NARIC network	Engagement with Network on ongoing basis (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			

SG5/6	Proactively seek to agree qualification recognition agreements with other countries or unilateral understandings	<p>Completion of work with NZQA on alignment of qualification frameworks in 2009</p> <p>In 2008, project proposal and draft alignment agreed</p>	Ongoing	Y		
SG5/7	Engage with national stakeholders on policy developments relating to implementation of Bologna process including participation in National Steering Group	<p>Effective participation in national steering group</p> <p>In 2008, assistance provided to DES in completing National Bologna Report and effective linkage of Framework with Bologna experts programme established</p>	Ongoing	Y	Close engagement with stakeholders in particular, DES and HEA	
SG5/8	Continue participation in coordination group for Bologna Framework	<p>Participate in group meetings – completed, 2008</p> <p>Contribute to conferences and reports – completed, 2008</p>	Ongoing			
SG5/9	Align Common European Framework of Reference for Languages(CEFRL)	<p>Complete paper on relationship of CEFRL and NFQ</p> <p><i>(achieved - note full</i></p>	2008	Y – see issues arising		Full alignment found not to be possible

		<i>alignment not possible)</i>				Issues raised in the paper need to be further considered in the context of continuing implementation of the Framework and developments in the international languages sector.
SG5/10	Assist DES in coordinating professional recognition system	Assistance provided as and when requested (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
SG5/11	Promote consistent approach to recognition of qualifications across professional bodies	Engagement with professional bodies in a range of fora (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
SG5/12	Conduct internal review of Qualifications Recognition Ireland and develop new operational approach	Continuous internal review (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing		Prioritisation of review by Authority and cross-organisational/ team work	
		Ongoing monitoring of operational approach (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
		Establishment of revised operational and procedural policies to support recognition service and in response to developing practices	2008	Y		

		<i>(achieved)</i>			
		Development of a draft handbook of operational and procedural policies <i>(achieved)</i> See report on recognition service activities for 2008	2008	Y	
		Introduction of Sharepoint system to streamline administration of service	2009	Y	
SG5/13	Introduce new work practice to enhance in-house expertise on qualifications recognition matters and improve info to public	See SG5/12	Ongoing		Continued development of the service contingent on available staff levels
		Improved website information (re-branding and re-design of website achieved, 2008)	2008	Y	
		Processes more streamlined (improvements introduced, 2008)	Ongoing	Y	
		Development of country profiles (7 completed, 2008)	Ongoing	Y	
SG5/14	Maintain North South East West (NSEW) engagement	Host and participate in 5 countries meetings	Ongoing	Y	

		<i>(achieved)</i> Agree new version of qualifications can cross boundaries	2009	On target	
		Discuss implications of EQF referencing for 5 countries	2009	On target	
		Participate in referencing of SCQF to EQF referencing <i>(achieved)</i>	on-going	On target	
SG5/15	In NSEW context, secure agreement on travelling of UK awarding bodies quality assurance arrangements to Ireland	Agreement completed, <i>(achived)</i> See SG2/11	2008	Y	
SG5/16	Develop an approach to promote recognition service to a range of audiences	See SG2/12			
SG5/17	Organise ENIC-NARIC funded conference on QRI for admissions and international officers in higher education institutions	Conference held, <i>(achieved November)</i>	2008	Y	
SG5/18	Establish effective links with the new Immigrant Council	Links established <i>(achieved)</i>	Ongoing	Y	
SG5/19	Hold seminar to raise awareness of Qualifications Recognition at FÁS Opportunities	Seminar completed, <i>(achieved, Feb)</i> see SG1/02	2008	Y	

SG5/20	Conference/ briefing session for recruiters and employers in relation to enhancing Recognitions Service	Hold conference/briefing session	2008	N		Postponed pending the development of Framework user guides (SG 2/12)
SG5/21	Scope research project to establish current and future demand for recognition service	Scope project	2009	On target		
SG5/22	Develop consistent approach to recognition of qualifications in education and training institutions	See SG5/17 Action points arising out of recognition seminar for higher education institutions to be implemented in 2009. They include - forming stronger relations with admissions officers/international officers, cooperation on country profiles and on comparability statements	Ongoing	On target		
SG5/23	Workshop with professional regulatory bodies to enhance recognition processes	Hold workshop	2009		Contingent on available funding	
SG5/24	Project management of ongoing facilitation of international visits	International visits accommodated and effectively managed - register of visits developed, 2008	Ongoing	Y		

SG5/25	Coordinate certificate supplements (CS)	CS to be issued for majority of level 6 awards made by FETAC In 2008, 22 certificate supplements developed by FETAC for trades/crafts	2008	Y	FETAC commitment	
SG5/26	Coordinate diploma supplements	Ongoing implementation of DS. Revised National Guidelines for completion of Diploma supplement in place (<i>achieved</i>) Survey of use of DS in HEIs, completed mid-2008 (with HETAC)	Continuing 2008	On target Y		
SG5/27	Gather statistical information on use of Europass, review awareness and development plan	Systems in place to record mobility documents and statistical information	2009	On target		
SG6	The Authority, in tandem with FETAC and HETAC, are high-quality, effective and efficient State agencies					
Highlight	<i>Tripartite work</i>					

2008	<i>QualifaX</i>					
SG6/1	Through tripartite structures ensure effective use of grants and Value for Money (VFM)	Tripartite with Councils working effectively in achieving effective use of grants and VFM (<i>audits completed</i>)	Annual and ongoing			Senior level commitment of three bodies
SG6/2	Tripartite – continue to consider ongoing resourcing needs for 3 bodies	Tripartite with Councils continuing to consider resourcing needs (<i>annual budgets decided, monitoring/adjustment achieved</i>)	Annual and ongoing			
SG6/3	Tripartite – implementation of decentralisation	Tripartite with Councils effectively responding to the implementation of decentralisation (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing	On hold		On hold, pending government policy review, 2011
SG6/4	Tripartite- common organisational objectives	Tripartite with Councils effectively developed common organisational objectives (<i>achieved</i>)	Ongoing			
SG6/4a	Tripartite approach to effective development and implementation of amalgamation of the 3 bodies and quality assurance functions	Tripartite with Councils to effectively implement organisational change in qualifications and quality assurance	New Action in 2008 - ongoing			
SG6/5	Ensure internal audit function continues	Internal audit function	Annual			

	effectively	managed effectively <i>(audit completed)</i>				
SG6/6	Ensure compliance with data protection	Full compliance with data protection legislation <i>(achieved)</i>	Ongoing	Y		
SG6/7	Continue implementation of PMDS and alignment with strategic and business plans	Effective implementation of PMDS <i>(achieved)</i>	Annual	Y		
SG6/8	Maintain Excellence Through People (ETP) and aim to achieve higher standard award in 2010	Achieve ETP Standard award and maintain it <i>(standard achieved, valid until 2010)</i>	2008	Y		Given that ETP standard is valid until 2011 and in context of amalgamation, the objective of achieving the higher standard in 2009 will not be pursued
SG6/9	Policy approach for QualifaX	Consultation on policy approach for QualifaX completed <i>(achieved)</i>	2009	Y	Effective integration of QualifaX achieved through consultation, teamwork and commitment of staff	
SG6/10	Develop detailed business plan for QualifaX	QualifaX business plan developed and implementation commenced	2008	Y		

		<i>(achieved - see Section I of progress report for details)</i>			
SG6/10a	Enhance QualifaX user experience, encouraging them to investigate independently	New web interface	2009 (new action)	Y	
SG6/10b	Promote accurate referencing of the NFQ on QualifaX to inform learner choice	Data on QualifaX is accurate, NFQ compliant and complete <i>(action underway)</i>	Ongoing	Y	
SG6/10c	QualifaX to support access, transfer and progression	Develop approach, 2009 QualifaX to make specific contribution to ATP	2009 Continuing	New action	
SG6/10d	Enhance information contained in Qualifax relating to employment, to inform individual choice	Links established with career and labour market information sources	2009	new action	
SG6/10e	QualifaX to address national socio-economic priorities	Links established and resources developed to raise awareness among users	Continuing	new action	
SG6/10f	QualifaX to provide increased learner access to high quality information	Qualifax is positioned as a leading information source	Continuing	New action	

SG6/10g	QualifaX operations are efficiently maintained	Management and operations of QualifaX reviewed	2009	New action	
SG6/11	Monitor customer satisfaction with all Authority operations	Customer satisfaction monitoring mechanisms in place (<i>achieved</i>)	Continuing	Y	
SG6/12	Continue to implement Irish Language requirements	Irish Language policy is implemented (<i>achieved</i>)	Continuing	Y	
SG6/13	Continue to monitor internal structures to ensure knowledge exchange and communications	Internal structures in place to ensure knowledge exchange and communications	Continuing	Y a	
		Introduce Sharepoint for internal knowledge management and exchange	2009		
SG6/14	Develop HR strategy	HR strategy completed In 2008, draft strategy prepared	2008	Partial completion	Draft strategy under review in light of amalgamation
SG6/15	Develop strategies for utilisation of IT to enhance performance	Systems are maintained and enhanced to support the organisations objectives In 2008: - IT system for HR	Ongoing	On target	Actions to be considered in light of amalgamation

SG6/15a	Develop strategies for utilisation of websites to enhance performance	<p>introduced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -plans developed to introduce Sharepoint in recognitions service (see SG5/12) - plans developed to introduced Sharepoint in internal knowledge management (see SG 6/13) - initial discussions with HETAC and FETAC on opportunities for shared use of FETAC business system <p>Strategy development for utilisation of website to enhance organisation performance</p> <p>In 2008:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -recognition website redesigned (SG5/13) - development work on enhancing QualifaX website done (SG6/10a) - plans in place to redesign remainder of Authority websites -new website monitoring system in place, utilisation being explored 	2009	On target		
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