

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS  
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2008-2012

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## FOREWORD BY CHAIRPERSON

I consider that the preparation and publication of this Strategic Plan 2008-2012 is the most important task that I will oversee in my term as Chairperson of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

This Plan follows closely on the finalisation of the quality review of the Authority which was completed by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in late 2007.

The plan sets out a new mission and vision for the Authority and its work. It sets out new and far-reaching goals and objectives which envisage the positive impact that the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications can have on Irish society. Since the Authority's establishment in 2001, the Authority worked on the development of this Framework and its initial implementation. It is now vital that we move to significantly deepen this implementation, and seek to undertake actions which will result in a beneficial impact on all in Irish society. This includes the operation of effective pathways between qualifications in the Framework; and the recognition of international qualifications in Ireland and of Framework qualifications internationally.

This work will not be undertaken by the Authority alone. This is a shared effort with our stakeholders. In achieving our goals and objectives, we will continue to work with awarding bodies, providers of education and training and quality assurance bodies as well as with learners, social partners, Government Departments and agencies.

A very important dimension of the work of the Authority over the next five years is to monitor and report on progress in achieving the goals and objectives set out in the Strategic Plan, its associated Business Plans and overall operations. Therefore, the plan includes a number of key reporting mechanisms and timeframes up to 2012.

We look forward to continuing to work with you in achieving a societal change, whereby the needs of learners across education and training are at the centre of an open, responsive and integrated qualifications system.



Paul Haran  
Chairperson

# 1

## MISSION

## MISSION AND VISION

THE MISSION OF THE AUTHORITY IS TO LEAD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS. THIS WILL BE DONE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AWARDING BODIES AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS AND WITH OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS. THE AUTHORITY WILL ENSURE THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS AND THAT IT BENEFITS LEARNERS, THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY.

OVER THE PERIOD 2008-2012, THE AUTHORITY WILL FOCUS ON ACHIEVING:

- THE WIDESPREAD USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS
- THE OPERATION OF EFFECTIVE PATHWAYS BETWEEN QUALIFICATIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK
- THE RECOGNITION OF INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN IRELAND, AND THE RECOGNITION OF FRAMEWORK QUALIFICATIONS INTERNATIONALLY.

## VISION

The Authority's vision is to achieve a societal change whereby the needs of learners across education and training are at the centre of an open, responsive and integrated qualifications system.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

The Authority will ensure that that the following six strategic goals are achieved:

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.

These goals will be attained by the Authority working with all stakeholders in education and training, especially awarding bodies, providers of education and training and quality assurance bodies. The Authority will work with these bodies and with learners, social partners, Government Departments and agencies.





## CONTEXT

### BACKGROUND

Since its establishment in 2001, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has led the development of the National Framework of Qualifications and the recognition of international qualifications. The Authority's vision is to achieve a societal change whereby the needs of learners across education and training are at the centre of an open, responsive and integrated qualifications system. We have worked in partnership with awarding bodies, Government departments, agencies and institutions to deliver a Framework that is widely accepted. We have taken action to increase access and progression, and to align the Irish qualifications system with European and international developments. Significant progress has been made in developing a common language of learning outcomes for all qualifications. This allows qualifications to be referenced against each other and makes it easier to develop accessible, relevant and quality-assured qualifications. All qualifications that are in the Framework are expressed in terms of what their holders know, can do and understand.

The main challenges in the period 2008-2012 are to advance the implementation of the Framework; achieve the widespread use of learning outcomes; the operation of effective pathways between qualifications; and achieve wider recognition of international qualifications in Ireland and Framework qualifications abroad. Work in these areas aims to achieve the overall goal of a more open, responsive and integrated qualifications system.

### NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

Education and training are key elements in achieving the vision to create a dynamic, internationalised and participatory society and economy as set out in the social partnership agreement, Towards 2016. A key goal of education policy is to ensure that each individual can participate in education to reach his/her full potential. Specific Government commitments have been made to

- increase participation in third level
- improve adult literacy
- develop alternatives to existing schools qualifications for younger students
- improve progression between further and higher education and training, and
- enhance the quality of third and fourth level education.

The Authority's work contributes to these goals. We are working to increase access to qualifications, to create effective pathways between qualifications and to maintain and enhance the quality of qualifications. We support the thrust of Towards 2016 which places the individual at the centre of public policy.

The National Development Plan identifies the role of the Framework in relation to the above goals as well as to the National Skills Strategy, labour mobility and all-island co-operation in education and training. The National Skills Strategy envisages that an additional 500 000 individuals in the workforce will need to

be upskilled i.e. by 2020, to progress by at least one level in the Framework above their current level of education and training. This requires action on qualifications. These range from measures that enable individuals to place their learning on the Framework, to measures that develop appropriate qualifications, programmes and pathways for them. The Authority, Government Departments, agencies and stakeholders need to further develop integrated approaches to these challenges.

The broader public policy context for the Authority is that of continued challenges to maintain and increase its effectiveness, responsiveness, accountability, flexibility and capacity to deliver. The performance of the Authority was reviewed in 2006 and it was deemed to be effective in performing its functions. We are strengthening our structural and planning capacity to address these challenges and deliver on our goals.

### **AUTHORITY QUALITY REVIEW**

This Plan follows closely on the finalisation of the quality review of the Authority which was completed by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in late 2007. The Departments considered that the Authority had carried out its functions effectively to date.

They highlighted key areas for further priority action, including:

- Enhanced implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications and the Authority's access, transfer and progression policies
- An enhanced communications strategy
- Increased co-ordination of a national approach to quality assurance in higher education
- The continuing expansion of the international qualifications recognition service of the Authority.

### **A CHANGING WORLD OF QUALIFICATIONS**

In the period 2008-2012, the qualifications system must continue to adjust to

- changing learner profiles (for example, more part-time learners, migrants, mature learners, learners in the workplace, increased learner mobility)
- an increase in the number of providers of programmes and greater diversity amongst them
- increased incidence of partnerships for learning in the development of programmes, for example, between providers and representatives of the workplace/community.
- greater demand from the workplace for tailor-made qualifications and for programmes to be developed quickly and delivered flexibly
- the increased regulation of professions and areas of work leading to increased requirements for qualifications, standard-setting, the recognition of international qualifications and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- the internationalisation of Ireland's education and training system.

The recent transformation in Northern Ireland, and in North-South co-operation,



opens up opportunities for collaboration to meet economic and social objectives. In relation to qualifications, such collaboration is underway in the North/ South/ East/ West framework for cooperation between qualifications bodies. It has focused on the alignment of qualifications frameworks and qualifications, and their quality arrangements.

Developments at the European and international level impinge on the Irish qualifications system. They include:

- the introduction of European meta-qualifications frameworks
- work to build a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in Europe by 2010, including co-operation on vocational education and training (the Lisbon agenda)
- work in the Bologna process to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive
- efforts to enhance the quality, transparency and international recognition of qualifications
- the development of national qualifications frameworks in other countries
- OECD-level activity in relation to qualifications
- continued strengthening of quality assurance standards and guidelines for higher education institutions and agencies
- improving the quality of education and training systems within the context of maintaining overall economic competitiveness
- a global shortage of skills and increased competition to attract individuals with appropriate skills to particular countries

### KEY PARTNERS IN THE AUTHORITY'S WORK

In addition to its direct responsibilities concerning the National Framework of Qualifications, access, transfer and progression, and the recognition of Irish and international qualifications, the Authority has a number of specific responsibilities towards key stakeholders:

- The Authority, the Further Education and Training Awards Council and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council share the same broad goals for the qualifications system. The Councils have separate responsibilities in relation to standard setting, programme validation, quality, the recognition of qualifications, delegation of authority and in ensuring the implementation of access, transfer and progression by providers. They work with a wide range of publicly-funded providers including the Institutes of Technology, FÁS, the VECs, Teagasc, BIM and Fáilte Ireland, as well as with an increasingly diverse range of private providers. Their work is critical to the ability of the Authority to deliver on its goals. The close engagement of the Authority with the Councils is reflected in the tripartite structure for managing relations. Our approach is to maintain a balance between autonomy and inter-dependence in relations between the three bodies.

- The Authority has worked closely with the Dublin Institute of Technology, in particular to support the improvement of its quality assurance arrangements, access, transfer and progression and implementation of the Framework. We will continue to work on a bilateral and collective basis with the DIT.
- The Authority has developed good working relations with the universities, principally through the Irish Universities Association and the Irish Universities Quality Board. We will develop closer working relations with each of the universities and their associated colleges in order to achieve deeper implementation of the Framework and related policies.
- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the State Examinations Commission work with the Authority, in particular to include the main qualifications made in the schools sector in the Framework. We will continue to work closely with these bodies.
- The Authority engages with a range of Government Departments and agencies to foster a culture of lifelong learning to support the qualifications system and engage with international partners. In this work, we have also acted as broker between different bodies and across policy areas. We will continue to develop and deepen our relations with these bodies.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The following values and principles build on those followed by us in our work to-date. These values and principles will also underpin our work at all-island, European and international levels.

### FOCUS ON THE LEARNER

We will promote a culture of lifelong learning and the continued development of an accessible, responsive, flexible and integrated qualifications system. The learner is the focus of the qualifications system. We will promote equality for all learners and access to the qualifications system for all in society.

### PARTNERSHIP WITH STAKEHOLDERS

We place particular importance on working effectively and efficiently with all stakeholders in education and training and beyond to achieve our goals. We will work in consultation and co-operation with national stakeholders and international partners to achieve our goals. We will respect their individual roles and responsibilities. We will seek, where appropriate, to lead change and to develop co-ordinated approaches to qualifications issues.

### QUALITY

Quality is integral to the qualifications system and to how we approach our work. We will work to the highest standards of public service with due regard to best management practices, value for money, accountability and service delivery.

### TRANSPARENCY AND CLARITY

We will maintain an open and transparent approach to our work and make optimum use of information technology and communication tools. Clarity and simplicity will inform our engagement with stakeholders.

### RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Our work will be informed by evidence, research and evaluation. This comprises awareness of qualifications needs and major trends and developments in relation to both qualifications and the public service context in which we operate.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

# 4

### GOAL 1: THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS IS WIDELY KNOWN, UNDERSTOOD, USED AND VALUED IN SOCIETY

The Authority is working to bring about the recognition of learning that individuals have achieved, be that in the form of qualifications, of experience or of learning acquired throughout life. This entails a cultural change from the traditional linear, provider-dominated approach to qualifications to one which has multiple pathways, is learner-centred and which focuses on the outcomes of learning. The Authority intends to lead the cultural change by shifting the focus of the qualifications system to the learner. It will use the Framework to emphasise learning outcomes as the basis for acquiring, comparing and valuing qualifications and other learning achievements. This will challenge traditional understandings of some qualifications. The new weighting of qualifications and greater clarity about how they relate to each other will require greater openness in the use of qualifications as a basis for selection, entry and access. The reliance on long-standing, specific qualifications for recruitment, entry to education and training programmes, access to grants or funding and, in some cases, for determining pay is, in many instances, called into question by the Framework. This will need to be addressed by developing broad awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Framework and of qualifications in society.

Qualifications are widely used as a benchmark for skills attainment levels in the population and as a marker of national and international competitiveness. The shift in focus to emphasise the learning outcomes of qualifications is not generally reflected in existing national or international statistics. This calls for work to reference qualifications and the Framework appropriately in national statistics.

A national information database on qualifications and the programmes leading to them is also vital. QualifaX has been developed over a number of years by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and was transferred to the Authority with effect from January 2008. This will be further developed in the lifetime of this plan.

#### OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY THE END OF 2012:

*There will be shared ownership of the National Framework of Qualifications by those making awards.*

*The Framework and pathways between qualifications will be widely known and understood by the general public, including learners and employers.*

*Building on QualifaX, a national information data base will be in place for qualifications recognised through the Framework and for programmes leading to such qualifications.*

*Qualifications and learning achievements will normally be used in recruitment with reference to the Framework.*

*Regulators of professional practice will increasingly use Framework learning outcomes as the basis for entry into regulated professions.*

*Government Departments and agencies will utilise the Framework in measuring qualifications and learning achievements for statistical purposes.*

*The Framework will normally inform funding mechanisms for education and training.*

*The National Framework of Qualifications will be appropriately and effectively used in public policy.*

## **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

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

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).

Referencing of the Framework in national education and training statistics.

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

Use of Framework learning outcomes by regulators of professional practice.

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

**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**

Education and training are central to the achievement of the vision and goals of the Government and of social partnership. The attainment by individuals of qualifications above their current level is a clear goal of the National Skills Strategy. The qualifications system embodied in the National Framework of Qualifications needs to be open to providers, employers and learners. It needs to support upskilling and social inclusion. New qualifications need to be developed quickly and effectively to meet these needs. The qualifications system as a whole must be coherent and integrated. This will allow effective pathways to operate between different kinds and levels of qualifications and it will help avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

There is also a challenge to ensure that the qualifications system contributes to the maintenance and improvement of national competitiveness at a time when there is increased labour mobility and learner mobility.

**OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY THE END OF 2012:**

*The Framework will be fully and effectively implemented by FETAC and HETAC and by providers with programmes leading to their awards, or with delegated authority to make awards; by universities and their associated colleges; by the Dublin Institute of Technology; and by the State Examinations Commission.*

*Framework learning outcomes will be the common currency of qualifications.*

*The recognition of professional and international qualifications made in Ireland will be promoted by relating them to the Framework through inclusion or alignment.*

*The awards previously made (legacy awards) by the Department of Education and Science and the universities will be included in the Framework.*

*The Framework will be implemented in an integrated and coherent manner across education and training.*

*The Framework will be implemented in a manner that meets national economic objectives including up-skilling.*

*The Framework will be implemented in a manner that meets individual and societal needs including national objectives on social inclusion.*

*Programmes of learning funded or part-funded by the State will normally lead to Framework awards.*

*Programmes of in-company and work-based education and training will normally lead to Framework awards.*

## **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

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

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

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

The availability of awards at all levels of the Framework.

The extent to which in-company training leads to awards in the Framework.

The Framework Implementation and Impact Study will generate further indicators of progress in implementing the Framework. Additional work to identify appropriate, repeatable indicators will be undertaken in the course of this plan.

### GOAL 3: EFFECTIVE AND INTEGRATED PATHWAYS BETWEEN QUALIFICATIONS OPERATE THROUGHOUT THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

A major objective of national legislation is to remove culs-de-sac in education and training. This allows individuals to build on and add to their qualifications as and when appropriate. This requires new routes into education and training programmes and effective pathways between qualifications. It involves opening up access for learners: offering credit, recognising prior learning, and easier movement within and across fields of learning. Real opportunities must be developed for learners to access qualifications at all points in the Framework. Learners must obtain appropriate recognition of what they have already achieved, based on what is required in order to obtain qualifications. Pathways must be clear and transparent. These changes will enable learners, including those traditionally excluded from effective participation, to enter onto programmes leading to qualifications, to succeed in attaining qualifications and to progress to further learning throughout their lives.

#### OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2012

*The Authority's policies on access, transfer and progression will be clear and focused, and will identify the responsibilities for implementation by stakeholders.*

*The Authority's policies on access, transfer and progression will be understood and implemented by awarding bodies and providers.*

*Barriers to effective and integrated pathways between qualifications throughout the National Framework of Qualifications will be identified and overcome.*

*A national action plan for the recognition of prior learning will be developed and implemented.*

*Credit accumulation and transfer will be widely available and effectively used across further and higher education and training.*

#### 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.

Implementation of the action plan for the Recognition of Prior Learning. This will include the identification of targets and their achievement.

Further work will be undertaken in the course of the Plan to develop appropriate monitoring mechanisms and/or indicators of progression with stakeholders.



## **GOAL 4:** **ALL FRAMEWORK QUALIFICATIONS ARE QUALITY ASSURED TO THE HIGHEST INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

The role of the Authority is to promote the maintenance and improvement of standards of qualifications and to carry out specific quality assurance functions as set out in legislation, in relation to FETAC, HETAC and the DIT. Quality is central to the integrity of the Framework and to building and maintaining trust in Ireland's education and training system. As the custodian of the Framework, the Authority has a legitimate interest in strengthening and promoting quality across the system.

The Authority will take a pro-active role in addressing quality issues that cut across the education and training system. We will promote quality in line with national and international policy developments, particularly at the European level where common approaches to quality in vocational education and training and in higher education as well as between these have been agreed. The work of the Irish Higher Education Quality Network is also very important here. We will pursue our objectives, within our resources, in conjunction with the main stakeholder bodies.

### **OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2012**

*The centrality of quality and the maintenance and improvement of standards of qualifications will be a cornerstone of Framework implementation.*

*There will be confidence and trust in the Framework, and in the standards of qualifications, in society in general, including learners and employers.*

*Rigorous quality assurance systems will underpin all qualifications that are recognised through the Framework. These quality assurance systems will have appropriate common elements; will provide for the full engagement of stakeholders and will meet European standards.*

*Quality assurance systems underpinning international qualifications will be appropriately recognised.*

### **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

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

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

**GOAL 5:**  
**FRAMEWORK QUALIFICATIONS ARE FULLY RECOGNISED  
 ABROAD AND QUALIFICATIONS GAINED OUTSIDE IRELAND  
 ARE APPROPRIATELY RECOGNISED IN IRELAND**

There are two primary purposes for which learners seek to have their qualifications recognised. These are comparability for the purposes of:

- access to learning opportunities
- access to employment.

There are differences in recognition arrangements concerning access to employment where professional practice is regulated by statute and employment which is not regulated in this way.

The Authority supports learners to achieve appropriate recognition of their qualifications. The Authority's Qualifications Recognition service works with stakeholders to recognise qualifications gained by learners. The Authority also promotes the recognition of Irish Framework qualifications abroad in a number of ways. The Framework has been aligned to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Work on alignment to the recently established European Qualifications Framework has commenced. This work assists holders of Irish qualifications to gain appropriate recognition of qualifications in order to access employment, education and training abroad.

The recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland enables holders of such awards to participate fully in national social and economic development. This is consistent with national policy objectives concerning employment, social inclusion and integration. The high numbers of workers and residents in Ireland with foreign qualifications, and the need to meet skills shortages, are expected to create an on-going demand for such recognition.

The Authority's work on recognition relies on its continued participation in international networks and working groups and engagement with international agencies and national stakeholders. The establishment of *Education Ireland* which is to lead the internationalisation of Irish education will impact on our role in the future.

**OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2012**

*The Framework will be aligned to the European Qualifications Framework.*

*Mutual recognition agreements or unilateral understandings will be in place relating the qualifications systems of key countries to the Irish Framework.*

*Those bodies outside Ireland which have authority to recognise international qualifications will have confidence in the high standards of Irish Framework qualifications. Clear information will be available to them to differentiate between qualifications that are in the Framework and those that are not.*

*Holders of Irish Framework qualifications will have appropriate recognition and access to education and training and to employment abroad.*

*The Authority's Qualifications Recognition service will be widely known and understood by providers, employers and the general public in Ireland.*

*Holders of non-Irish qualifications will have appropriate recognition of their qualifications enabling them to access education and training and employment in Ireland.*

*There will be enhanced recognition of qualifications between North and South.*

## **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

Alignment of the Framework with the European Qualifications Framework

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

Additional measures of performance will be developed in the course of this Plan.

**GOAL 6:**  
**THE AUTHORITY, IN TANDEM WITH FETAC AND HETAC,**  
**ARE HIGH-QUALITY, EFFECTIVE AND**  
**EFFICIENT STATE AGENCIES**

The Authority is committed to maintaining and developing the highest standards of corporate governance and to delivering a high quality service to its customers and stakeholders. This includes: the continued development of the staff and the organisational capacity of the Authority; responding effectively to changes in its operational environment; and ensuring that the Authority is appropriately resourced. The Authority expanded its staff in January 2008 with the commencement of its responsibilities in relation to QualifaX. It will ensure that the existing QualifaX staff are integrated into the Authority and its work.

The Authority and the Awards Councils, HETAC and FETAC, are independent organisations with their own functions. They have joint responsibilities in respect of the National Framework of Qualifications. Their common areas of work include standards, access, transfer and progression, implementing the Framework, the recognition of qualifications and quality assurance. In addition, the Authority has a budgetary responsibility towards the Councils. It sets procedures for their functions, and reviews their fees and their performance. In practice, the three organisations work closely together, at national and international levels. A tripartite structure exists to facilitate and strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between them.

The Authority has identified this joint goal in relation to its work and that of the Councils in acknowledgment of their interdependence and in recognition of the Authority's belief in subsidiarity and autonomy. At the same time, it is conscious of the distinct roles of each, and that there can be some public confusion of the three bodies. It is also aware that the work of other organisations, including the universities and those responsible for qualifications in the schools sector, is essential to the achievement of the Authority's goals.

**OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2012**

*An enhanced Framework of Accountability for the Authority and the Councils will operate effectively.*

*The Authority and Councils will work together on a tripartite basis and will be appropriately resourced to enable them to attain their goals and objectives*

*The organisational culture within the Authority will be one where staff are valued on an individual basis and on a collective basis while working in teams and where a performance and development approach is effectively implemented.*

*Government policy on decentralisation will be implemented*

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

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

Customer satisfaction with Authority operations as measured by feedback

Compliance with data protection requirements

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

# 5

## ENSURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

Along with the Strategic Plan, the Authority is engaged in detailed business planning. A set of actions to be undertaken by the Authority in 2008 and 2009 has been developed. This is being published separately by the Authority on its website. The Authority also intends to publish a further business plan for 2010 to 2012 in early 2010.

Over the period of the Strategic Plan, the Authority will monitor and report on progress in achieving the goals and objectives set out in the Strategic Plan, its Business Plan and overall operations. In addition to the performance indicators set out in this plan, work will be undertaken to develop further qualitative and quantitative measures of progress towards meeting the Authority's overall goals, objectives and actions.

The following are the Authority's main reporting mechanisms and timeframes up to 2012:

- On an annual basis the Authority will consider progress on the Business Plan, including on performance indicators contained in the Strategic Plan. This will take place in the first two months of each year.
- The Framework Implementation and Impact Study, to be completed in autumn 2009, will measure progress and establish benchmarks for measuring future progress.
- 2-year reports on activity 2008-2009 and on 2010-11 will be published by the Authority.
- Quality reviews of the Authority (2012), DIT (2011), HETAC (2011) and FETAC (2013) to be undertaken within five years of completion of first quality reviews.
- The next Authority review which is to conclude in 2012 will incorporate a full report on performance indicators for the Strategic Plan (2012). This will also then feed into the preparation of the next Strategic Plan.

In addition to the above reports, the Authority will submit annual accounts and audits to relevant Government Departments and agencies.

The Authority will monitor the follow-up to findings and recommendations of quality reviews concerning itself, the awards Councils and DIT on an annual basis. The Authority will also report on follow-up to the Framework Implementation and Impact Study.

It is recognised by the Authority that progress will be made in achieving the

goals and objectives set out in the Strategic Plan by the Authority working with all stakeholders in education and training, especially, awarding bodies, providers of education and training and quality assurance bodies as well as with learners, social partners, Government Departments and agencies. Building on the speedy progress of the establishment of the Framework and its initial implementation, the Authority is confident that the goals and objectives set out in this Strategic Plan will be achieved by all involved.

The Authority considers that the interdependence among stakeholders for the achievement of the goals and objectives set out in this plan is a positive aspect of the nature of the work of the Authority. Nevertheless, the Authority recognises that there are risks associated with this and will work with stakeholders to mitigate risks, while also recognising that the nature of the risks can equally enhance the potential for effective implementation.

The Authority also recognises that it is dependent on its own staff for the effective implementation of this plan. The Authority has confidence in its staff and this confidence is underpinned by the positive outcome of the quality review completed in 2007. Given the small staff of the Authority and the necessary individual expertise within it, the Authority, while noting the significant benefits that have accrued to it from regular managed turnover of staff and, in 2007, from staff restructuring, is very aware of the potential impact of any significant staff turnover on the implementation of this plan. The Authority will be seeking to ensure that where turnover takes place, particularly in the context of the Government's decentralisation programme, it takes place in a managed way that does not impact negatively on implementation of the plan.

## APPENDIX 1 MEMBERS OF THE AUTHORITY

Mr Paul Haran (Chairperson)  
Dr Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Inez Bailey  
Mr Eamon Devoy  
Mr Tony Donohoe  
Mr Hamidreza Khodabakhshi  
Dr Seán Conlan  
Mr Pat O'Callaghan  
Mr Martin Shanahan  
Prof W.J. Smyth  
Mr Donal O'Rourke  
Mr Mogens Berg  
Prof Anne Moran  
Mr Seán Ó Foghlú (Chief Executive)



## APPENDIX 2 STAFF OF THE AUTHORITY

Ms Siobhan Brennan, Staff Officer, QualifaX  
Ms Claire Byrne, Director of Corporate Affairs  
Ms Breda Cahill, Clerical Officer, QualifaX  
Ms Laura Carrigan, Manager of Operations - Qualifications Recognition  
Mr Eamonn Collins, Administration Executive  
Ms Lorna Conway, Assistant Staff Officer, Qualifications Recognition  
Mr Tom Farrell, Head of Operations, QualifaX  
Ms Carmel Kelly, Project Officer  
Ms Celine Kelly, Human Resources Officer  
Ms Niamh Lenehan, Information Officer/Manager of Operations – Europass  
Ms Mairéad McMahon – Finance Control  
Dr Anna Murphy, Director of Research and Strategic Development  
Dr Jim Murray, Director of Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition  
Ms Trish O’Brien, Development Officer  
Mr John O’Connor, Development Officer  
Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Chief Executive  
Mr William O’Keeffe, Assistant Staff Officer, International Recognition  
Mr Sean O’Reilly, Project Officer  
Ms Annette Reddy, Clerical Officer, QualifaX  
Ms Patricia Reddy, Staff Officer, QualifaX  
Mr Brendan Slattery, Clerical Officer, QualifaX  
Dr Deirdre Stritch, Project Officer  
Ms Yvonne Rudden – Clerical Officer  
Ms Anne Walsh, Clerical Officer, QualifaX