



Qualification Advisory Board (QAB) Approved QAB Programme Amendment Process

Introduction

The QAB approves Level 7 and 8 Initial Professional Education programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) sector. The Board examines higher education programmes for alignment with the Professional Awards Criteria and Guidelines (PACG) developed for the sector in 2019.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are advised upon obtaining initial QAB approval that they are obliged to inform the QAB of any changes to the programme. This is imperative as it ensures that changes are recorded by the QAB secretariat, and that amendments to programmes that are deemed substantive are further reviewed to ensure continued adherence to the PACG.

This also allows the QAB secretariat to ensure the approved list of HEI programmes is kept up to date and provides clarity for students and graduates of QAB-approved programmes.

The QAB-approved list is used by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to approve funding to graduates of QAB-approved programmes and to recognise the programmes for the purposes of employment in the sector. DCEDIY may base future funding initiatives on the QAB-approved list

Changes to programmes may include, but are not limited, to the examples outlined below. The changes relate to the programme(s) being offered, and not to the institution offering the programme.

The HEI:

- (i) decides not to run, or to withdraw, the programme
- (ii) changes the title of the programme
- (iii) decides to modify the programme, for example: adding or removing modules, amending ECT credits, changes to student practice placement, changes to exit or embedded awards, changes to institutional collaborations in respect of the programme delivery, changes to recognition of prior learning (RPL) arrangements for the programme

Contact with QAB

Using the process outlined in this document, HEIs are required to inform the QAB secretariat of any planned changes to programmes. If changes have already been made to programmes, on an exceptional basis retrospective approval of the QAB can be sought using the appended form. The QAB secretariat is available to discuss planned changes in advance with HEIs. Such discussions cannot be taken to give any form of QAB approval to proposed changes and are intended to provide initial support and advice.



All changes must go through this programme amendment process. The revised programme will not be considered to meet the requirements of the PACG until the amendments have been reviewed and approved by the QAB. It is important that the QAB is notified in advance of any changes to approved programmes given the potential risk to current students should QAB approval be withdrawn.

Process

A **QAB Programme Amendment Form** (Appendix) has been developed to support HEIs in this process. The key steps in the process are set out below.

1. If you plan to make a change to your programme please complete the form at Appendix 1 and return to: gab@equality.gov.ie
2. The QAB secretariat will review the form and assess the changes as being either
 - (i) Not substantive: minor administrative changes
 - (ii) Minor: significant administrative changes or
 - (iii) Substantive: any academic change to the programme.
3. Changes to programmes that fall into categories (i) and (ii) will generally be deemed not to require any further review but may require an update to records. For example a change to a programme title may be deemed not substantive or minor, and would only require an update to the published list.
4. Changes to programmes that are deemed by the QAB secretariat as substantive will require a review.
5. The QAB secretariat will engage a reviewer to consider the proposed changes. As part of this process the secretariat may engage with the HEI to seek further information outside of that already provided in the programme amendment form. This information will be shared with the reviewer.
6. The reviewer will issue a recommendation to the QAB for consideration which will be that
 - (i) following the proposed changes the programme would continue to adhere to the PACG, or
 - (ii) following the proposed changes the programme would not adhere to the PACG.
7. In this latter case the HEI must retain the existing programme in its current QAB-approved format if they wish to retain QAB approval. The change may be resubmitted for further consideration taking on board the comments of the QAB.
8. The QAB secretariat will formally advise the HEI of the outcome of the decision of the QAB. The QAB will endeavour to respond to notices of changes as efficiently as possible. In the case of changes which are not substantive or minor the QAB anticipates these will be responded to in approximately four weeks. Substantive changes may require more time.



Appendix: QAB Programme Amendment Form

One form is to be completed for each QAB-approved programme

1	Title of programme	
	Name of programme title as approved by the QAB	
	Programme commencement date	
	Date of initial QAB approval	
	Date of QAB Implementation Review Process ¹ Approval (if applicable)	
2	Primary contact person for Programme	
	Name	
	Position	
	Email	
	Phone Number	
3. Please set out below: (i) the details of any change(s) planned to be made to the QAB-approved programme (ii) the reasons for making the change(s) and (iii) the planned date for implementation of the change.		
In cases where the HEI is seeking retrospective approval of the QAB please clearly note the dates that changes were made and detail the reasons that QAB-approval was not sought at the time.		
<u>Please use a new box for each planned change</u>		
3.1(a)		
(i) Proposed change planned to the QAB-approved programme		
(ii) Reason(s) for the proposed change		
(iii) Planned date for implementation of the proposed change		
3.1(b) List all supporting documentation included with this application in respect of the proposed change.		

¹ As set out in the [Terms of Reference for the QAB](#), the Implementation Review Process (Phase 2) is the next step in the approval process. The aim of the Implementation Review Process is to confirm and certify the continued approval of the QAB of the programme. A pilot is commencing in 2023.