

Quality Assurance Services

Policy No. 01

Quality Assurance Monitoring and Authentication

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Developed by: Quality Assurance Services	Approved By: Director of Construction and Quality Services

1. Purpose

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) has incorporated quality assurance within the education and training sectors by mandating all approved Co-ordinating Providers or linked Collaborating Providers to develop, establish and maintain written policies and procedures for quality assurance. The policies and procedures will be in accordance with QQI requirements for the purposes of attesting the effectiveness of and improving the quality of education, training and associated services. The requisite to respond to these requirements underpins and guides this policy.

This policy sets out the SOLAS Quality Assurance Services (QAS) approach to monitoring. SOLAS has responsibility under Schedule 5 of the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations, 2013 and Schedule 1 of the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work (Quarries) Regulations, 2008 for the programmes listed under the Construction Skills Certification Schemes (CSCS) and Quarry Skills Certification Scheme (QSCS).

SOLAS is committed to ensuring its quality assurance responsibilities are in adherence with QQI requirements. To demonstrate this commitment QAS will oversee the quality assurance monitoring of SOLAS programme management, training and assessment delivery, verification processes and associated services.

2. Definition

The term quality assurance within the education and training sectors is used to describe the processes that ensure the learning environment and assessment methodologies and processes reach an acceptable threshold of quality. Quality assurance also describes the enhancement of education and training provision and the standards attained by participants.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all SOLAS programmes leading to QQI awards that are under the auspices of SOLAS Construction Services. QAS will engage in systematic monitoring and authentication of these SOLAS operational units, Approved Training Organisations, Approved Tutors and approved service providers to attest adherence with SOLAS quality assurance requirements, to identify issues, corrective and preventative measures and continuous improvement opportunities for the attention of the SOLAS operational units.

The scope of the monitoring includes those involved directly or indirectly in the provision of CSCS and QSCS programmes:

1. SOLAS Construction Services
2. Education and Training Boards
3. SOLAS Approved Training Organisations
4. SOLAS Approved Tutors
5. National Construction Scheme

4. Governance

Established in 2013 under the Further Education and Training Act SOLAS is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills and is governed by a Board. SOLAS is tasked with building the identity and values of a world class integrated Further Education and Training (FET) sector that is responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of an evolving economy. SOLAS manages an array of national training services including the CSCS and QSCS.

The Board of SOLAS was appointed by Government in October 2013. It comprises a Chairman and 12 ordinary members, including the Chief Executive Officer - SOLAS (ex-officio). The board is responsible for setting the strategy and direction of SOLAS. It also provides strategic guidance to SOLAS, and monitors our activities and effectiveness as well as our internal financial control systems.

5. Mission

The SOLAS mission is to fund, co-ordinate and monitor a range of FET provision to ensure economic and social wellbeing and to play our part in progressing, influencing and supporting the development of a FET sector that is more responsive to the needs of learners and employers, is innovative, flexible and demand-led.

6. Vision

The SOLAS vision is to achieve a well-recognised FET sector, valued for its quality and for delivery of education, training and skills that enables learners to succeed in the labour market and thrive in society.

7. Core Principles

The SOLAS core values are that programmes must be:

Evidence-Based - Ensuring there is robust intelligence to inform the planning, funding and design of new and existing FET provision

Collaborative - Focusing on adding value by fostering collaboration across the FET sector, sharing learning and empowering delivery organisations

Responsible and Flexible - Promoting innovation and the funding of provision that meets identified needs

Outward looking and Learning Centred - Being open to new ideas, proactive in seeking out evidence of 'what works' in FET and ensuring that the learner experience is at the centre of decision-making

Focused on Excellence - Maintaining a central focus on standards and quality in FET, including excellence in programme development and the on-going professional development of the FET workforce

SOLAS is committed to developing and operating a monitoring and external authentication policy where the ethos of the policy is embedded in the core principles of the organisation. The essence of the policy is to encompass a partnership approach to monitoring with the key objectives of attaining quality assurance compliance and continuous improvement.

8. Monitoring Practices

SOLAS monitoring and authentication activities include process and observational monitoring of SOLAS Approved Training Organisations delivering SOLAS programmes leading to QQI certification and the National Construction Scheme.

SOLAS monitoring and authentication will also involve internal process monitoring of policies, procedures and processes implemented by SOLAS operational units - Construction Services.

These monitoring activities include areas, such as:

- a) administration and service processes
- b) verification and accreditation processes
- c) implementation of agreed procedures
- d) implementation of assessment regulations and marking schemes

SOLAS will schedule its Authorised Monitors to conduct monitoring and authentication visits to SOLAS Approved Training Organisations and the National Construction Scheme. SOLAS Approved Training Organisations will be scheduled for monitoring visits by SOLAS from Monday to Saturday inclusive. The types of monitoring that will take place with SOLAS Approved Training Organisations are:

- a) Process Audit Monitoring,
- b) Observational Monitoring

In relation to CSCS and QSCS assessment events the SOLAS policy is to subject Approved Training Organisations and approved Tutors to unannounced monitoring.

9. Policy

In accordance with the quality assurance systems implemented by the SOLAS Construction Services operational unit and being cognisant of existing QQI policies, the monitoring service will be guided by the following:

1. Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines
2. Policy on Monitoring

QAS will monitor, authenticate and evaluate compliance with the Construction Services Unit quality assurance system. QAS is committed to a consistent approach to monitoring that is based on the ethics of transparency, traceability and equality of treatment in the operation of formal monitoring and

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authentication of SOLAS programmes and associated services provided by SOLAS and SOLAS Approved Training Organisations. QAS will systematically monitor and evaluate the provision of SOLAS programmes from initial participant engagement to participant accreditation. All monitoring activities will be independent of the relevant SOLAS operational units and monitoring outcomes and determinations will be evidence based.

SOLAS is committed to utilising the principles of independent monitoring and external authentication to verify the effectiveness of SOLAS:

1. programme design
2. programme development
3. programme implementation
4. programme delivery
5. programme review
6. programme administration and associated processes
7. programme facilities and equipment
8. assessment design
9. assessment development
10. assessment implementation
11. assessment verification and accreditation processes

Furthermore, SOLAS is steadfast in substantiating compliance with the prescribed requirements as determined by the SOLAS operational units, as outlined in the following:

1. Standard Operating Procedures [SOP]
2. Codes of Conduct [CoC]
3. Memorandum of Understanding [MOU]
4. Service Level Agreement [SLA]

It is SOLAS policy to allow only SOLAS Authorised Monitors to conduct quality assurance monitoring and external authentication activities. SOLAS is committed to empowering it's approved Authorised Monitors to exercise their professional judgment when engaging in monitoring and to balance the need for consistent monitoring with the flexibility required to respond to each unique circumstance. All monitoring instruments and reports will be recorded and stored in line with the SOLAS document retention policy.

Document History

No.	Details of Approval	Approved Signed	Issue Date
Version 1	Approved as Version 1	CQAS Management Team	06/06/2019
Revision No.	Details of Revisions ¹	Approved Signed ²	Issue Date ³
1	Removed terminology relating to Apprenticeship in the context of Collaborating Providers.	QAS Team- Approved by B.Head	12/08/2020
2	Clarified ref. to MOU and SLA	QAS Team- Approved by B.Head	03/11/2020

¹ If following a review from the Construction Services Management Team, that the procedure is deemed fit for purpose and that no amendments are necessary this determination should also be recorded.

² Signed by the Construction Services Manager

³ Issue Date is the date the Construction Services Manager approves commencement

