



Craft Transfer Plan FAQs



This FAQ aims to provide clarity on the planned transfer of Curriculum Development, Assessment and Awarding for craft apprenticeships to the educational providers; referred to as the Craft Transfer Plan. The FAQs aim to provide clarity to providers, employers, apprentices and other stakeholders on what is changing, what is not, and how the transition will be managed.

If you have a question that is not addressed in this document, you can send it to craft.transfer@solas.ie or craft.transfer@hea.ie

This document will continue to be revised and updated as the Craft Transfer Plan progresses.

What is the Craft Transfer Plan?

The Craft Transfer Plan sets out the transfer of SOLAS' current role in the curriculum development and assessment for the 25 craft apprenticeship programmes to Education Providers, and the transfer of the role of Awarding Body from QQI to Higher Education Institutions.

The plan is being developed jointly by SOLAS, DFHERIS, the HEA and QQI, working closely with education providers.

The plan covers the 25 craft apprenticeships only, and does not have an impact on the Consortia-led Apprenticeship.

Why is this transfer occurring?

Strengthening craft apprenticeships is a key objective under the Action Plan for Apprenticeship. It reflects the critical role that craft apprenticeships play in supporting Ireland's national infrastructure targets and meeting current and future skills needs.

Quality assurance is the foundation of our education and training system. It ensures that programmes remain aligned with industry needs, uphold academic standards and integrity, and deliver meaningful outcomes that are trusted by learners, employers and society more broadly.

To progress these aims Minister Lawless wrote to SOLAS on the 3rd of October 2025, requesting a plan to address the following points:

- Governance and oversight arrangements, both during the transition period and following its completion.
- The specific roles and responsibilities relating to craft curriculum and assessment that are to be transferred from SOLAS, along with details of what SOLAS will continue to be responsible for.
- A process to assign, for each craft apprenticeship, the education provider(s) responsible for curriculum, assessment and the awarding of craft certificates. This process should be designed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the HEA and QQI.
- Timelines and key milestones for the transfer's implementation, along with initial views on resource requirements.
- Risk mitigation measures, identifying potential challenges and how they will be addressed.

The proposed changes covered by the Craft Transfer Plan leverage the expertise available across the tertiary education system, ensuring that responsibility for the named functions rests with the most appropriate entities.

What will transfer from SOLAS and QQI to the Education Providers?

The Craft Transfer Plan will see SOLAS' current role in craft apprenticeship curriculum development and assessment transfer to Higher and Further Education Providers.

Currently, QQI is the awarding body for all 25 craft apprenticeships, and under this Craft Transfer Plan this role will move to the Higher Education Institutions; specifically, the five Technological Universities and Dundalk Institute of Technology. Certificates remain nationally recognised and QQI will retain responsibilities for external quality assurance.



What will remain the same?

The Craft Transfer Plan does not change the statutory apprenticeship system or the apprentice and employer experience.

SOLAS will retain the statutory responsibility for apprenticeship, and will continue to fulfil its existing roles in:

- Industrial Training Orders
- Maintenance of the national register of apprentices and national database of apprenticeship employers
- Apprentice registration
- Scheduling of off-the-job training
- Training allowances
- Employer registration
- Ongoing employer relations and support
- Management of participating employers
- Forecasting data and statistics
- Capacity planning
- Apprentice access and inclusion
- Apprenticeship promotion
- Authorised Officer function

Apprentices will continue to attend their off-the-job training in both Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education (HE) Providers. The Providers involved in craft apprenticeships will not change.

There is no proposed change to the duration of the apprenticeship programmes, or the duration or structure of individual phases.

QQI will retain responsibilities for external quality assurance.

Retained by SOLAS as Legislative Coordinator

- Industrial Training Orders
- Maintenance of the national register of apprentices and national database of apprenticeship employers
- Forecasting data and statistics
- Capacity planning
- Apprentice registration
- Scheduling of off-the-job training
- Apprentice access and inclusion
- Apprenticeship promotion
- Employer registration
- Ongoing employer relations and support
- Management of participating employers
- Authorised Officer function

Shared responsibilities between SOLAS and Provider Coordinators

- Apprentice progress and completion - links both on and off job phases
- National Apprenticeship Appeals and Review Committee (NAARC) appeals
- Minimum apprentice entry requirements

Transferred to Provider Coordinators

- Curriculum development review and update
- Assessment development review and update
- Learner support
- RPL
- NOAF for craft apprenticeship
- development and maintenance
- Awarding function (in their capacity as DABs)
- Results approval across all 7 phases
- Awarding/certification

Retained by QQI as external QA body

- Monitoring and review of the effectiveness and implementation of NOAF (through inter alia thematic reviews and provider-level review, and monitoring activity, as appropriate)
- Revision of statutory QA guidelines (as appropriate)
- Monitoring (primarily in the form of annual QA reports and quality dialogue meetings)
- External review of QA system at provider level (cyclical, and from time to time, as appropriate)
- Thematic review of QA of apprenticeship

What does the change mean for apprentices?

There will be no change to apprenticeship eligibility, programme duration, or the on-the-job and off-the-job phases. Apprentices will continue to attend their off-the-job training in Further and Higher Education providers.

SOLAS will continue its existing roles in apprentice supports, including registration, scheduling, training allowances, access and inclusion, and employer engagement.

During the transition period, it will remain business as usual, with SOLAS continuing to develop craft curriculum and assessment, and QQI continuing to issue awards.

Post-transfer, Education Providers will take responsibility for curriculum development and assessment, and Higher Education Institutions will take on the role of awarding body for the national craft certificates, with QQI retaining an external quality assurance role.

What does the change mean for apprentice employers?

Employers will continue to register and engage with SOLAS as the statutory authority responsible for apprenticeship.

SOLAS will continue its existing roles in employer supports, workforce planning, capacity planning, forecasting and promotion of apprenticeship.

There is no change to employer obligations or processes, including apprentice registration or employer approval.

Post-transfer, employers will work more directly with Education Providers in relation to curriculum content and assessment delivery.



The timeline for the transfer

The transfer of roles is planned to be completed by the end of 2027.



How will this work be achieved?

SOLAS, HEA and QQI developed a high-level Craft Transfer Plan, which was submitted to the Minister in November 2025. This plan was approved by the Minister in January 2026. SOLAS, DFHERIS, HEA, QQI, HE and FET Providers are now collaborating to develop a detailed implementation plan for this transfer.

How will we engage and communicate with stakeholders?

An in-person stakeholder town hall event was held on the 29th April.

Continued stakeholder engagement is an essential part of this transfer, and this will be achieved through established stakeholder engagement fora as well as future in-person events as needed.

In addition, quarterly newsletters will provide an update on progress from the previous quarter, as well as plans for the next quarter. This newsletter will be circulated via email and will also be available on the SOLAS, HEA and QQI websites.

What happens during the transition period?

Until the transfer of the SOLAS and QQI roles has been completed at the end of 2027, it will remain business as usual with SOLAS developing curriculum and assessment of all 25 craft apprenticeship programmes, and QQI issuing the award certificates. There will be no change to programme delivery, assessment or awarding arrangements during this period.

The transition will be carefully managed to ensure continuity for apprentices currently in training, and clear communications will be provided as detailed implementation arrangements are agreed.

