



# Craft Transfer Plan Newsletter

## May 2026



This newsletter aims to provide a stakeholder update on the Plan for the Transfer of Curriculum Development, Assessment and Awarding for Craft Apprenticeship to Providers (the “Craft Transfer Plan”). It reflects the current stage of development of the Plan as of May 2026.

### **Context and rationale for the Craft Transfer Plan**

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 strengthen quality, in October 2025, Minister Lawless directed that responsibility for craft curriculum development, assessment and awarding should transfer from SOLAS and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to education providers and requested that a priority plan be put in place. The Minister asked that this plan establish clear governance, oversight, timelines and risk mitigation arrangements to support a well managed transition.

The Craft Transfer Plan responds to this request. It is also informed by the 2025 QQI statutory review of quality assurance arrangements for craft apprenticeships. That review provided valuable system level insight and identified opportunities to strengthen quality assurance across the apprenticeship system.

The transfer builds on the expertise that already exists across the tertiary education system and is designed to ensure that responsibility for craft curriculum, assessment and awarding sits with the most appropriate education providers, while maintaining the integrity and consistency of the national apprenticeship system.

The Craft Transfer Plan is being jointly progressed by DFHERIS, SOLAS, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and QQI, working closely with Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education (HE) providers. This collaborative approach is intended to ensure continuity for apprentices and employers, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and a strong, trusted quality framework that supports craft apprenticeships now and into the future.

### **How the project will be delivered**

A high-level Craft Transfer Plan was submitted to Minister Lawless in November 2025 and approved in January 2026. Since then, DFHERIS, SOLAS, HEA, QQI and education providers have been working together to develop a detailed implementation plan.

Delivery of the project is being supported through dedicated governance structures, including a Steering Committee and provider-led alliances, alongside FET and HE project implementation teams. This phased approach is designed to ensure continuity for apprentices and employers throughout the transition period.

The timeline for the delivery of this transfer is Q4 2027.

### **What will change**

Under the Craft Transfer Plan:

- Responsibility for craft apprenticeship curriculum development, assessment and awarding will transfer from SOLAS to Education providers.
- The Designated Awarding Body (DAB) for craft apprenticeships will transfer from QQI to the Higher Education Institutions, specifically the five Technological Universities and Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Following transfer, education providers will take the lead on curriculum review and updates, assessment development and delivery, working within national quality assurance arrangements. Craft certificates will remain nationally recognised, with QQI retaining an external quality assurance role.

## What will not change

The Craft Transfer Plan will not change the statutory apprenticeship system.

- SOLAS will remain the statutory authority for apprenticeship and will continue its existing roles, including apprentice, employer registration, employer engagement and apprenticeship promotion.
- Along with the HEA it will continue scheduling of off-the-job training, forecasting, capacity planning and access and inclusion.
- Apprentices will continue to attend their off-the-job training in FET and HE providers.
- There will be no change to programme duration or to the structure of on-the-job and off-the-job phases.
- 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.

## Project governance

The Craft Transfer Plan is overseen by a Steering Committee with representation from DFHERIS, SOLAS, HEA, QQI, Technological University Association (TUA) and Educational Training Boards (ETBs). This committee provides strategic oversight and ensures alignment across all partners involved in the transfer.

### Steering Committee members

#### DFHERIS

Sally Cao; John O'Farrell

#### SOLAS

Colm McEvoy; Con Ferry; Emma Siddall

#### QQI

Barbara Kelly; Mairéad Boland

#### HEA

Vivienne Patterson; Louise Sherry; Ruaidhri Neavyn

#### TUA

Maria Kyne; Michael Hannon

#### ETB CEs

Caitríona Murphy; Tom Grady

In addition, the Designated Awarding Body (DAB) Alliance, has been established to support collaboration across HE providers and development of the national QA framework for craft apprenticeship (NQAF). FET and HE project implementation teams are in place to progress the detailed planning and delivery work within their respective sectors. The Provider Alliances will be developed in due course which will include representation from all FET and HE Providers involved in craft apprenticeship programmes.

## High-level timeline and progress on milestones to date

Significant progress has already been made, including:

- Approval of the high-level Craft Transfer Plan in January 2026.
- Establishment of governance structures, including the Steering Committee and the DAB Alliance, in Q1 2026.
- Establishment of the FET and HE project implementation teams.
- Early stakeholder engagement activities, including a national town hall event, this newsletter and the accompanying FAQ document.

Work currently underway includes the development of the detailed implementation plan, resourcing the HE and FET project teams and formalising the Provider Alliances.

Key future milestones include the development of a National Quality Assurance Framework for the craft apprenticeship system and the identification of longer-term resources needed to support Providers post-transfer. The transfer of functions is planned to be completed by the end of 2027.

## How stakeholders will continue to be engaged

Engagement with stakeholders remains a central part of the Craft Transfer Plan. This will be achieved through established stakeholder engagement fora as well as in-person events as needed. The first Craft Transfer Plan stakeholder event was held on 29th April 2026, and was well attended by a wide selection of representatives from educational providers, employers, apprentices, trade unions, relevant public bodies and government representatives.

In addition, the Craft Transfer Plan Steering Committee will also issue:

- A quarterly newsletter which will provide updates on progress and outline planned work for the coming period.
- A FAQ document which will continue to be updated and expanded as the plan progresses.

These newsletters and FAQs will be circulated by email and published on the SOLAS, HEA and QQI websites.

If you have questions about the Craft Transfer Plan that are not addressed in the current updates, you can contact the project team at: [craft.transfer@solas.ie](mailto:craft.transfer@solas.ie) or [craft.transfer@hea.ie](mailto:craft.transfer@hea.ie)



Craft Transfer Plan Steering Committee - Colm McEvoy, Mairéad Boland and John O'Farrell are not pictured



Craft Transfer Plan stakeholder town hall event 29th April 2026

