

27th Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee

14 December, 2020 from 11:00 am to 1:00pm

MS Teams Meeting

Meeting Note

Present: Anne Walsh - Committee Chair
Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Aileen Ponton - International Expert
Bryan Fields - National Expert
Niamh O'Reilly - Board Member
Hannah McGee – National Expert
Alan Power – National Expert
Aoife Sweeney – National Expert
Achim Hopbach, International Expert

In attendance: Peter Cullen – Head of Research and Innovation (QQI Key Executive for the PSC)
Ann Graves - QQI Secretary

The Chair opened the meeting.

1 Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

2 Minutes of previous meetings.

2.1 26th Meeting (PSC/M26), Approved.

The minutes can be 'pp' signed in the Covid-19 context.

3 Matters arising from the minutes of previous meetings.

No matters arising

4 Strategic Approach

4.1 Chair's Report - An opportunity to reflect

The Chair noted that we are at a pivotal stage in the development of education in Ireland and that it is important to recognise the changes that are happening and consider how the PSC can support the evolution of the system. Over the next couple of meetings, the Committee will consider innovative ideas for embracing change while contributing to the work of QQI in helping to maintain quality of educational provision and appropriate standards of educational qualifications.

In contributing to the work of QQI, the PSC is expected to periodically review its work and consider how it can enhance its own effectiveness. The Committee agreed to commence such a

review, by considering how it carries out its functions in line with the terms reference and reflecting on those functions, it is envisaged that contributions from members may be captured and opportunities for enhancement be identified.

The PSC considered the question, included in the Chair's Report circulated: *Does the PSC have the information it requires to adequately satisfy itself that proposed policy instruments individually and collectively are suited to the evolving legislative, socio-economic, educational, cultural and technological needs and contexts?*

Following discussion, it was agreed that the PSC would receive:

- Regular high-level briefings on skills needs and learner needs;
- Snapshot – holistic views of different aspects of what QQI is doing;
- Sight of the risk register elements appropriate to the work of the committee;
- A framework for the evaluation of material presented to the PSC for decision or advice to ensure all expertise is taken on board and
- A proposal for measuring the impact of the work of the PSC.

4.2 Approach to consultation on the Green Paper on Qualifications

The Executive noted that the Green Paper on Qualifications had been published in Summer in the context of Covid-19.

The PSC discussed the engagement of stakeholders on the future for FET standards, noting that:

- QQI is currently the only body which can certify FET awards that are included in the NFQ;
- QQI awards standards range from the very broad general ones such as the professional award-type descriptors, where expected learning outcomes for qualifications are developed by providers at the programme design stage, to very prescriptive standards of the Common Awards System (CAS) (there are currently 1800) that leave relatively little to programme designers' discretion.

The Green Paper raises questions about how QQI's approach to FET standards should evolve. The QQI executive sought the PSC's advice on the approach to consultation with stakeholders on the questions raised by the Green Paper.

The PSC noted the importance of inclusion of all stakeholder groups including providers of FET both public and private and HEIs with access arrangements, employers in relation to recruitment and staff development, regulators, learners and those with an interest in permeability of qualifications, disability groups and more remote and marginalised groups. The PSC considered ways in which to engage – in addition to bilateral meetings with representatives from stakeholder groups it would be useful to have events or a conference to focus on specific broad questions, the members also considered that it would be useful to address the question relating to the two major award-types at NFQ Level 6 and the problems of access, transfer and progression from FE to HE.

The PSC also discussed the proposed establishment of a standing advisory group, which would include organisations that have roles relating to educational qualifications.

The Executive thanked the members and welcomed the clear ideas on ways to progress.

5 Standards – review and development

5.1 Measures to Mitigate Impact of Covid-19 on Programmes Leading to QQI Awards

The PSC noted the COVID-19 mitigation measures implemented by the QQI executive

6 Policy and Guidelines – review and development

6.1 Policy Context - Micro Credentials - National and European developments

The paper was considered by two members of the PSC, Achim Hopbach and Alan Power, who presented an overview of the report from International and National perspectives respectively. The PSC recognised the importance of people being able to upskill particularly in the context of Covid-19 and thanked both members for their contributions. The PSC noted that there is no requirement for legislative changes to recognise micro-credentials which are already facilitated on the NFQ.

6.2 Policy Stocktake - Update of QQI policies and current state of play

Noted the Policy Stocktake which is an ongoing process. The Executive advised that this will be presented to the PSC more frequently in future.

7 2021 Schedule of Meetings

The PSC agreed the following schedule of meetings for 2021

Monday 15 March
Monday 14 June
Monday 20 September
Monday 15 November

The Chair closed the meeting and wished the members the best for the festive season and 2021.

Meeting ended.