

Policies and Standards Committee
Thursday, 27th September 2018
Denzille Lane, Dublin (11:am – 1:30pm)

Present: Anne Walsh - Committee Chair
Niamh O'Reilly – Board Member
Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Aileen Ponton - International Expert
Bryan Fields - National Expert
Roisin Sweeney - Head of Awards Standards, QQI

In attendance: Paul Brady - QQI Secretary
Carmel Kelly - QQI (Item 5.3)
John O'Connor – QQI (Item 5.2)

Apologies: Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert
Lucien Bollaert - International Expert
Daire Keogh – National Expert

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed all members to this Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) meeting. The committee send good wishes to Lucien Bollaert at this time.

The Chair brought to the attention of members a change in order of business in that Item 5.3 Report on the accreditation/approval of HEI programmes by professional and regulatory bodies would be taken before Item 5.2. Approach to Policy and Criteria for including Awards within the National Framework of Qualifications.

1 1.1 Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

2 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 18th of 4 July 2018

The Minutes of the Meetings of 4th July 2018 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes

No Business

4.1 Standards

4.1 Award Standards – Further Education and Training

- Explanatory Memorandum

The Committee noted the issue of identification of awards to be rationalised and that a data analysis was undertaken on the number, type and usage of awards. From this it was proposed to establish criteria for the rationalisation of awards and the members were asked to consider the following criteria being proposed.

- All compound (i.e. major, special purpose, supplemental) and minor awards not certified since 2013 will be withdrawn
- All compound and minor awards with certification less than 20 since 2013 will be withdrawn.
- The status of programmes validated against the above awards (including minors) will be checked and providers advised of proposed withdrawal

During discussion members noted the need for a cautionary approach and a detailed communications process notifying providers of intended rationalisation of specific awards.

It was also brought to the committee's attention that a new Government initiative has been launched setting out a policy framework for employee development opportunities in Ireland, supported by Solas and the Education and Training Boards. This initiative may impact on the demand for awards at levels 4, 5 and 6. A communications plan will form part of the awards rationalisation and review process.

The Committee Approved the criteria for rationalisation of CAS awards.

5.1 Policy

5.1.QQI Amended Legislation Programme Update

- QQI Amended Legislation Programme 2018/2019

The Committee were updated on the progress of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018, which is now before the Seanad Eireann, First Stage.

The main objectives of the Bill are:

- To strengthen QQI's functions in particular areas (e.g. Quality Assurance of providers, Protection for Enrolled Learners Fund)
- To address a number of deficiencies which have been identified in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 (e.g. introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM)).
- In addition to the Designated Awarding Bodies the proposed amended legislation contains provisions to authorise QQI to list awarding bodies (LABs) and to include their awards within the Framework.

The Joint Education Committee has decided to undertake a stakeholder engagement process. QQI have been asked to make a submission. It is now likely to be Q1 2019 before the legislation is enacted. The committee noted the QQI Amended Legislation Project Plan which has a number of projects aligned to it. Policy development is progressing in line with the proposed legislation. These are subject to change if there are further amendments to the legislation. New or revised policies will be presented to the PSC in due course.

5.3 Report on the accreditation/approval of HEI programmes by professional and regulatory bodies

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Report on the accreditation / approval of HEI programmes by professional and regulatory bodies

The Report focused on the accreditation/approval processes from the perspective of the eleven Irish bodies selected. It forms part of QQI's strategy in engaging in Quality Assurance activities to enhance and add value to qualifications. The report aids in the transparency of professional accreditation processes for example there were comparable processes across bodies and a notable shift to a public interest model and governance such as international and other benchmarking references are part of the process.

The committee noted that many organisations were experiencing change either through reviewing, evaluating or implementing their own policies and procedures.

The members noted the conclusions of the report and recognised the value and transparency which this report brings to the professional accreditation process.

5.2 Approach to Policy and Criteria for including Awards within the National Framework of Qualifications

- QQI Explanatory Memorandum

A power point presentation, given at the meeting, explained the rationale for changes originating from the proposed amended legislation currently before the Seanad. These changes will lead to giving a wider range of awarding bodies access to the NFQ and strengthening the process for any qualification to be included in NFQ.

The committee discussed the content of the presentation and noted the amendments to Section 43 and new Sections 55A-55I, which establishes the legal basis for policy and criteria for inclusion of awards within the Framework. In addition to the Designated Awarding Bodies, the proposed amended legislation contains provisions to authorise QQI to list awarding bodies (LABs) and to include their awards within the Framework. The Committee **noted** that there may be a high demand from other European and International awarding bodies to become LABs, which may provide a competitive advantage for that provider. This new development will also introduce competition to QQI as an awarding body. The Committee also noted that the process for recognition will be delivered on a cost recovery basis. The Committee noted that a project plan for this activity has been approved by QQI's Programme Board in March 2018, an internal steering group has been established to manage development of technical elements of the policy. An external advisory group has also been established to provide advice to QQI on this issue.

The next step is for QQI to develop a draft paper covering the proposed approach to policy and criteria for including awards within National Framework of Qualifications for consultation with our various stakeholders.

6. Green Papers

No business

7. White Papers

No business

8. 8.3 New Publications since last PSC meeting

The Committee members' attention was brought to the new publications from QQI since its last meeting in March 2018. Links were provided for each publication:

- Trends and Developments in Further Education Qualifications
- Key Dates for Certification 2019
- Annual Report 2017
- Strategy Statement 2019 -2021

9. PSC self-evaluation feedback to Board

The Committee noted the extract from the PSC Self-assessment evaluation which was included in the Executive Report Self-assessment Evaluation of Committees Performance 2017 presented to the Board at its last meeting 21st September 2018.

PSC Meeting Schedule:

Proposed meeting for 2019 on 12th / 13th March (to be confirmed)

A Doodle Poll will be forwarded to members to decide on dates for meetings in June, September and November

In closing the Chair thanked the members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their contributions and participation in the meeting.