

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the twelfth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Tuesday, 24 June 2014 at 10.00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present:

- Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)
- Dr. Pádraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Ms. Claire Byrne (Secretary)
- Dr. Barbara Brittingham (attended via phone conferencing)
- Ms. Una Buckley
- Dr. Margaret Cullen
- Ms. Mary Danagher
- Mr. Kevin Donoghue
- Dr. Ann-Louise Gilligan
- Ms. Joanne Harmon
- Mr. James Moore

Apologies: No apologies

In attendance:

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 6, 7 and 8)
- Mr. Ray O'Neill (Item 6.3)
- Mr. Vincent Teo (Item 6.2)
- Mr. Ultan Tuite (Item 6)

INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, welcomed Kevin Donoghue, USI Vice President of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, to his first meeting as a member of the Board and thanked his predecessor, Cat O'Driscoll, for her contributions during her term of office as a QQI Board Member and wished her every success in her future endeavours.

The Board noted that the Executive would provide an update on Private Colleges under **Any Other Business** and agreed that otherwise, the Agenda for the meeting was acceptable and adopted same.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 11 APRIL 2014

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 11 April 2014 were **confirmed and signed**.

2. NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 11 APRIL 2014

The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 11 April 2014* for publication on the QQI website.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1. Consultative Forum

The Board noted that the Executive was beginning to consider the format and themes for the next meeting of the Consultative Forum scheduled for October 2014.

3.2. Board Interaction with Stakeholders

The Board noted that in relation to the timetable for the interaction of the Board with stakeholders, the Executive had not advanced the timetable as yet but was formalising an approach with the Provider Relations Section. The Board noted that work was also progressing on the provision of Business Cards for Board Members.

3.3. FETAC Financial Statements 2012

The Board noted that the Executive had received clearance from the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for the *2012 FETAC Financial Statements* and certification is expected by the end of June 2014.

4. QQI ANNUAL REPORT 2013

4.1. The Board noted the **QQI Annual Report 2013**. The Board noted the final version of the Annual Report 2013 which had taken account of comments and suggestions received from Board Members following their consideration of the draft Report at the previous Board Meeting held on 11 April.

The Board noted that the Executive intended to commence work on the 2014 Annual Report at an early date with a view to the final report being available in early 2015.

The Board welcomed the Executive's suggestion of a six monthly progress report to be presented to the Board.

The Board **approved** the **QQI Annual Report for 2013** subject to any necessary edits and congratulated the Executive on its production. The Board noted that the Executive would forward the final Report to the Minister for Education and Skills by 30 June 2014.

5. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Board noted the documents relating to the **Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**.

The Board noted the *Comprehensive Policy Development Programme Snapshot 2014* which was tabled at the Board meeting and which would be published on the QQI website in the coming days. The Board noted that the next phase of policy development would include policies on the recognition of qualifications and the International Education Mark (IEM).

5.1. Green Paper for Information on Programmes and Awards for Learners

The Board noted the update/background on ***the Green Paper for Information on Programmes and Awards for Learners*** which had been referred by the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) for the Board's attention. The Board discussed the matter and noted that discussions are continuing with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and that the Board will continue to be briefed on developments.

5.2. Draft Policy and Criteria for Re-Engagement with QQI

The Board noted that the three policy documents on the agenda for its consideration were the first policies developed by the Executive to be published for consultation following consideration by the Policies and Standards Committee. The Board noted that this policy consisted of an Overarching Policy plus 2 further policy documents – the first relating to further education and the second to higher education. The Board noted the supporting document – ***Report on the White Paper Consultation Process***

(April-May 2014) detailing the areas highlighted during the consultation process.

The Board noted that there had been no significant/substantial modifications to the draft Policies on foot of the feedback received through the consultation process.

The Board noted the continuing concern of providers in relation to Fees particularly within the Community and Voluntary sector and suggested the Executive consider communicating the rationale behind the charging of fees with this sector again in an effort to reduce representations. The Board noted that any fees (or waivers) have to be applied in the context of public policy and the consent of the Ministers for Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform. The Board noted that QQI has to be able to provide a sustainable and equitable system of quality assurance of education and training. The Board requested the Executive to further develop a positive dialogue with this sector at a sectoral level in an effort to ease concerns.

The Board suggested the Executive use the adoption of the Re-Engagement Policies as an opportunity to celebrate the Irish education system and how much it has advanced in the last 40-50 years.

The Board **adopted** the following Policy and Criteria:

- ***Re-Engagement with QQI: Overarching Policy for All Providers,***
- ***Re-Engagement with QQI: Policy and Criteria for Renewed Access to QQI Validation for Voluntary Providers of Further Education and Training,***
- ***Re-Engagement with QQI: Policy and Criteria for Renewed Access to QQI Validation for Voluntary Providers of Higher Education and Training.***

6. AUDIT AND RISK

The Board noted the document entitled **Audit and Risk**.

6.1. Audit Committee Meeting

The Board noted the Report of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2014 provided by the Chairperson of the Committee. The Board noted the minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 3 April 2014. The Board noted that the Audit

Committee would receive an update on the Aged Debtors listing at its meeting scheduled for 12 September next.

6.2. QQI Financial Statements 2013

The Board noted the draft *QQI Financial Statements 2013* together with a briefing by Mr. Vincent Teo of Crowleys DFK. The Board noted that this was the first set of financial statements for the new organisation and covered the 14 month period from the establishment of QQI in November 2012 up to 31 December 2013. The Board noted that the C&AG's Office had cleared the FETAC Financial Statements for 2012 – which would contribute part of the opening balance for the QQI accounts (and the Executive expected the 2012 set to be certified by the end of June). The Board noted that on foot of the recommendation of the Audit Committee at its meeting of 13 June 2014, the Executive proposed to make the non-material amendments to the draft QQI Financial Statements in accordance with the recommendations.

The Board **approved** the signing by the Chairperson and the Chief Executive of the draft ***QQI Financial Statements 2013*** subject to the proposed modifications outlined above and subject to there being no material changes.

6.3. ICT Security and Controls Internal Audit Report

The Board noted the *ICT Security and Controls Internal Audit Report* which had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 3 April together with an *ICT Actions Update Report* considered at its meeting on 13 June 2014. The Board noted the Executive's intention to have QQI's *IT Security Policy* in place shortly. It is currently awaiting approval by the Senior Management Team and will be disseminated to all staff thereafter. The Board noted that information sessions on the IT Security Policy would be arranged for all staff to assist them in understanding their responsibilities and to facilitate staff compliance to the procedures. The Board noted the Executive hoped to complete this process within the next few months.

The Board noted that many of the ICT issues resulting from the amalgamation process and the merging of legacy systems have since been closed off. The Board noted that a further update on progress would be presented to the Audit Committee

at its September Meeting. The Board noted that confidentiality and security measures were built in to any third party ICT staff contracts.

The Board **approved** the ***ICT Security and Controls Internal Audit Report***.

6.4. Risk Register

The Board noted that the draft *QQI Risk Register* had been recommended to the Board by the Audit Committee following its consideration at the June Committee meeting. The Board noted that the draft register had been produced on foot of the Board Workshop with Mazars in December 2013 and significant work with SMT and Business Unit Managers in the period since. The Board commended the Executive for the work done to date. The Board noted that the Risk Register was a living document and could be updated on an ongoing basis. The Board noted that an additional heading (Testing of Internal Controls) had been introduced to the register at the requested of the Audit Committee. The Board noted that the SMT keep a watching brief on the Risk Register. The Board **approved** the ***QQI Risk Register***.

6.5. Meeting with Representative of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Board noted that the Audit Committee had met with a representative of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The meeting had been extremely useful [and touched on the protracted nature of the FETAC Financial Statement process and the acknowledgement that the delays involved occurred on both parts]. The Board noted that a Management Letter would be issued for the 2011 and 2012 FETAC Financial Statements and noted that the C&AG expected that QQI would be on a normal schedule of audits with effect from the auditing of the Financial Statements for 2014.

6.6. Internal Audit Plan 2014

The Board noted that following some unforeseen circumstances and in order to take account of priorities identified in the QQI Risk Register, it had been necessary for the Executive to revise the *Schedule of Internal Audits* for 2014. The Board noted the revised schedule and requested the Executive to consider QQI's External Auditor as a contingency should the internal option be unavailable at any point.

7. BUDGET AND FINANCE

The Board noted the documents entitled **Budget and Finance** which included the Variance Budget for the period 1 January to 30 April 2014. The Board noted the delay in drawing down the State Grant in the first quarter due to a reduction in expenditure. The Board noted the reduction in expenditure had been due largely to a decrease in payroll costs and lower than expected ICT costs.

The Board **approved** the extension of existing contracts for **ICT Contract Resources** in accordance with public procurement rules for the six month period from 1 September 2014 to the end of January 2015.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES

Caitriona Lawless left the meeting for this item.

The Board noted the **Update on Human Resources**.

Items omitted from this note.

8.4. Organisational Development Programme (ODP)

The Board noted that a number of change management initiatives have been put in place to support QQI in its early development phase. The integrated package of initiatives for all staff was discussed by the Board.

A cross-agency Coordinating Committee was set up to oversee and monitor the ODP. The Committee considered that there should be mechanisms in place for staff feedback on initiatives. A SurveyMonkey feedback questionnaire on the One QQI programme was sent to all staff and the results were discussed by the Board.

The Board **agreed** that the organisational development programme would be considered on an ongoing basis as part of the human resource management agenda item.

The Board requested that the Executive would put a plan in place to advance specific actions resulting from the outcomes of the ODP and the staff feedback.

8.5. PMDS

The Board noted that PMDS is to be implemented across QQI for the six month assessment period from 1 July 2014 to 30 December 2014. The Board noted that the first stage of the PMDS roll-out is the development of a role profile for all staff in the organisation and that all staff will complete a PMDS review at the end of the year. A full PMDS cycle will commence in January 2015.

8.6. Agenda items for future Board meetings

The Board **agreed** that human resource management, the organisational development programme and matters of internal communication would be standing agenda items for the Board.

9. **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The Board noted the document entitled **Governance Structure**.

The Board **approved** the proposed amendment (the replacement of the word '*confirmed*' with the word '*noted*') in the ***Terms of Reference of the Programme and Awards Executive Committee***. The amended sentence will now read: '*Decisions taken by the Programme and Awards Executive Committee will be reported to and noted by the Board*'.

The Board noted that the Executive had, on 9 May 2014, received the consent of the Minister for Education and Skills to the Committee Structure as previously agreed by the Board and as required under the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*.

10. **FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGY**

The Board noted the **Update on Further Education and Training Strategy**.

The Board noted the recent joint publication by SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills of the strategy document '*Further Education and Training Strategy, 2014 – 2019*'. The Board noted that the Executive intended to draft a response to the strategy document which it would present to the Board at its meeting scheduled for 26 September 2014. The

Board noted that the Executive was planning to organise a Board Workshop to coincide with the September meeting focusing on Further Education and Training Strategy/Developments as well as on Corporate Planning/Planning into 2015.

11. ENQA REVIEW

The Board noted the oral update on the **ENQA Review**, together with a copy of the confirmed list of attendees at the review site visit which took place on 22 and 23 May. The Executive thanked all Board Members for their attendance and expressed the appreciation of the SMT of the Board's contributions and support.

The Board noted that the Panel was currently drafting the review report and the Executive would be provided with an opportunity to correct factual inaccuracies. The Board noted that during the course of the Chief Executive's debrief with the Panel at the end of the site visit, the matter of resources had been raised and are of concern, especially in light of the reduction of staff numbers during the amalgamation process. The Board noted that the Panel had indicated QQI's compliance with a significant number of the criteria including Independence. The Board noted that the Panel felt QQI's Self Evaluation Report had not been reflective enough, this was largely due to the short period which QQI had been in existence prior to the Review.

Board Members requested an opportunity to provide feedback on their session with the Review Panel and the Executive noted the Board's desire in there being a greater focus on analysis and critique by the Board itself.

12. ITEMS FOR NOTING

The Board noted the following **Items for Noting**.

12.1. Consultative Forum

The Board noted the report of the first meeting of the *Consultative Forum* held on 1 April 2014.

12.2. Programme and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the report of the first meeting of the *Programme and Awards Oversight Committee* held on 10 April 2014, together with an oral report by its Vice-Chairperson.

12.3. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Policies and Standards Committee* held on 6 May 2014, together with an oral report by its Chairperson. The Board noted that the Committee had confirmed its meeting dates for the remainder of the year.

12.4. Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Executive Committee* held on 4 June 2014.

12.5. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from 14 April to 23 June 2014).

12.6. Draft Board Agenda (September 2014) and Rolling Board Agenda

The Board noted the current draft Agenda for the next Board Meeting scheduled for 26 September 2014 and the updated QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2014. The Board noted that the item relating to Board Performance Outcomes 2014 was deferred to the November 2014 meeting.

13. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 26 September 2014** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1. Closure of Private Colleges

The Board noted the Executive's verbal update on certain Private Colleges. The Board noted that since April 2014, five private colleges have closed. The Board noted

that one of these colleges had a previous relationship with QQI, having had ACELS recognition until it was withdrawn in December 2013. The College also had an awarding relationship with FETAC. QQI has collected the details regarding impacted learners (approx. 150) and is currently placing these learners with alternative providers. The Board noted that several members of QQI staff had been working exclusively on this matter since it occurred and the Board requested the Executive to pass their appreciation and thanks to the staff involved.

The Board noted that the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Justice and Equality had, on 21 May 2014, announced the establishment of a *Task Force on Students Affected by the Closure of Private Colleges*. The Board noted that two members of staff were representing QQI on the Task Force, the membership of which included the Departments of Education and Skills, Justice and Equality, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Enterprise Ireland, City of Dublin Education and Training Board, Irish Council for International Students, Marketing English in Ireland and the Higher Education Colleges Association. The Board noted that the Task Force had met five times to date with an interim update provided to the relevant Ministers on 30 May. The Board noted that a final report is currently being prepared.

Item omitted from this note.

14.3. Board Meeting Schedule 2015

As there was insufficient time to discuss this matter, it was proposed that the Executive would contact members electronically in relation to the proposed dates.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____