POLICIES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (PSC)
Monday 29 February, 2016 - 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2

Present: Informal Session

James Moore - Board Member and Committee Chair

Joanne Harmon – Board Member

Catherine MacEnri – National Expert

Lucien Bollaert   - International Expert

Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member

Barbara Kelly - Director of Qualifications, QQI

Roisin Sweeney – Head of Awards Standards, QQI

Joined for Formal Agenda

Ewart Keep - International Expert

Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert

In attendance: Paul Brady - QQI Secretary

Trish O'Brien, Head of Strategic Planning and Communications (Item 0.1)

Karena Maguire, Head of Quality Projects, QQI (Item 6.2)

Apologies: Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert

Ann Louise Gilligan – Board Member

Informal Agenda (10:30am to 12:00 noon)

In opening the informal meeting, the Chair welcomed the new members to the Policies and Standards Committee, thanked them for joining and for their future participation on the committee.

1. There followed a *tour de table* for introductions and a brief description of each member's background.

2. Conflict of Interest.

   a.   Conflict of Interest
       The guide on Conflicts of Interest was introduced and outlined. The purpose of the guide is to protect and preserve the integrity of QQI's decision making process, staff and committee members.

    b.   Conflicts of Interest Declaration Form

    New members were issued with, signed and returned a Conflicts of Interest Declaration Form.

3.   Summary of Work Completed to date by Policies and Standards Committee

    a.   Policies and Awards Standards adopted by the PSC March 2014 – January 2016 –

    An overview of policy and standards work completed since the inception of the committee was presented to give new members an appreciation of the type and volume of activity the committee has dealt with to date. The context for future activity is set within QQI's Strategy Statement 2016-2018.

    b.   Development process

    c.   Policy Development Overview

    QQI's approach to policy development and an overview of progress to date was outlined. It was noted that QQI has sought amendment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. This is required to allow QQI complete policy development and facilitate implementation.

    d.   Awards Standards Strategy

    The strategy was outlined in the context of the changing landscape of education and training. Examples of this include the establishment of the Apprenticeship Council, National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure a systematic approach to the implementation of QQI's Awards policy.

Formal Agenda (1:00pm – 3:30pm)

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed the members.

0.   Introduction of the Reconstituted Policies and Standards Committee

    0.1.1   Code of Practice for Committees of QQI

           The members NOTED the Code of Practice for Committees of QQI

    0.1.2   PSC Terms of Reference

           The members considered the Terms of Reference for the Policy and Standards Committee and the changes therein. Minor amendments to policy will be processed via the committee. Significant change in policy will be referred to the Board. The committee NOTED the Terms of Reference and their fitness for purpose in carrying out the functions of the Committee.

1   Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 11th December 2015 and 19th January 2016 (PSC/M8 &M9)

The Minutes of the Meetings of 11th December 2015 and 19th January 2016 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2.   Matters Arising from Minutes

No Business

3.   Standards Determinations

In order to help engage all members actively in the deliberations, selected non-executive PSC members were requested to take a special interest in one or two documents from the agenda and present those documents to the Committee for the purpose of leading off the discussions. All members were still required to read and consider all the documents on the agenda.

Presentations concerning proposed awards standards were to include observations on:

- Soundness of the case for establishing a new standard
- Consistency with QQI's strategy
- Clarity for stakeholders of the new standard
- Suitability of the development and consultation process as described
- Questions about the proposed standard that warrant discussion at Committee

3.1 Awards Standards - NFQ Level 6,7,8,9 standards in Architectural Technology

The members noted the standards presented and considered the observations made including the consultation process and feedback received from same.
The PSC agreed to ADOPT the new award standards in Architectural Technology at NFQ Levels 6,7,8 and 9.

4.   Policy Development

No Business

5.   Green Papers

No Business

6.   White Papers

6.1   White paper QA Guidelines

- Explanatory Memorandum

- Report of feedback received

- Core QA Guidelines

- Sector Specific Guidelines – Independent and Private Providers

- Apprenticeship Guidelines

- QQI Policy on QA Guidelines Amended December 2015

The members NOTED the QA Guidelines presented and the extensive feedback received arising from the consultation process. This included commentary on the utility of having core and topic specific guidelines, the meaning of 'statutory' and 'guidelines', the potential timescale for implementation of the guidelines and the introduction of the Core Validation Policy and Criteria on the validation of education and training programmes. It was also noted that providers should use the guidelines as more than a compliance tool. Due to the extended consultation process the documents presented to the committee were not the final version. Additional adjustments to be made were identified in the Explanatory Memorandum. On completion of final editing, the guidelines will be forwarded to committee members for information. It was noted that the QQI Executive has prioritised progression of three of the seven sets of guidelines and that the remainder will require further consultation before presentation to the committee for Adoption.

The PSC agreed to APPROVE the above QA Guidelines and the amended QA Policy for final publication.

7.   Any Other Business

7.1.1   The PSC AGREED the Schedule of committee meeting dates for the remainder of 2016 as follows:

- Friday 13th May 2016
- Tuesday 28th June 2016 (to be held offsite)
- Wednesday 12th October 2016
- Start time for meetings will be 10:30am and finish at 1:30pm

7.1.2   Minor Modification to Policy to effect policy implementation and operation – 'Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act' – Tabled.

The committee reviewed a request by the Executive to approve the removal of the definition of *'similar programme'* from the PEL Protocols (agreed by the Board in 2013) in order to facilitate a more pragmatic approach to the implementation of the 2012 Act.

Following discussion, the PSC AGREED to a minor edit, the removal of the definition of 'similar programme', to the *Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 or the 2012 Act (PEL Protocols).*

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