

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)
Friday, 9th March 2018
Denzille Lane, Dublin (10:30am – 1:00pm)

Present: Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member and Acting Committee Chair
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert
Lucien Bollaert - International Expert
Ewart Keep - International Expert
Bryan Fields - National Expert
Roisin Sweeney - Head of Awards Standards, QQI

In attendance: Paul Brady - QQI Secretary
Carmel Kelly - QQI (Item 4.1)
John O'Connor - QQI (Item 7.1a)

Apologies: Joanne Harmon - Board Member
Daire Keogh - National Expert

0.1 As the Board has yet to appoint a Chairperson to this committee the members agreed with the Executive proposal to appoint Barbara Kelly to act as Chair for this meeting. The Chair welcomed all the members.

0.2 There were no Declarations of Conflicts of Interest expressed.

0.3 Members noted the Revised Agenda.

1 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 8th of November 2017

The Minutes of the Meetings of 8th November 2017 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

2.1 NFQ Level 5 and 6 standards in Dance and Music

The Committee had raised the issue of including reference to the 'Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children'. The executive discussed this with the Standards Development Group and was advised that such reference is not necessary.

2.2 Awards Standards – Response to consultation. The executive had informed the members that it would bring to the PSC meeting in March 2018 a paper covering non-performing FET awards and how QQI will endeavour to identify and deal with awards that have little or no certification or provider programmes validated. This work has been incorporated into a wider project on the Common Award System and the executive will bring an update to the PSC's next meeting.

2.3 A verbal update was provided on the progress made concerning the Green Paper on Assessment. The members were informed that an amended version has been sent for publication and will be open for consultation until December 2018. QQI is holding a workshop in March 2018 (on the implications of the Nowak case) and several other workshops/explorations in the autumn to help stimulate discussion.

Matters Arising

The members were updated on the appointment of Aileen Ponton, Chief Executive of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership, as replacement for Ewart Keep, whose term as a member of the committee ends on 19th March 2018 after four years of service.

3. Standards Determinations

3.1 FE Award Standards

3.1.1 NFQ Level 6 standards in Commercial Scuba Diving Operations and Surface Supplied Diving Operations

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Level 6 Commercial Scuba Diving Operations
- Level 6 Surface Supplied Diving Operations

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made in relation to the Diving Awards. The members recognised the work involved in the review process, the breadth of expertise in the Standard Development Group (SRG) and that the completion of the suite of awards

will facilitate learner progression to further education or entry in to the workforce at home and abroad. The Committee noted that the development of the awards was consistent with QQI's policies for standard development and noted the clarity for stakeholders of the learning outcomes for these special purpose awards.

Following discussion, the PSC **AGREED to ADOPT** the new Special Purpose award standards at NFQ Levels 6 for:

- Level 6 Commercial Scuba Diving Operations
- Level 6 Surface Supplied Diving Operations

4. Policy

4.1 Amended Legislation Programme

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Amended Legislation Programme

The Committee members noted that as a result of new legislation, The **Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill 2018**, to be introduced in 2018, a programme of work titled 'Amended Legislation Programme' will be undertaken by QQI. This programme will consist of eight separate projects which will deal with the implementation of the various elements of the proposed legislation.

The areas covered under the amended legislation are:

- International Education Mark comprising one for higher education and one for English language education (ELE)
- Protection for Enrolled Learners Fund
- Listed Awarding Bodies
- Corporate Fitness of Providers
- Update various QQI policies and procedures, and
- Communications Plan

The Committee discussed various elements of the amended legislation. The Committee were informed that it is anticipated that a number of QQI policies will be reviewed/developed, as a result of the amended legislation, and will be presented to the committee for consideration and adoption in due course.

5. Green Papers

No business

6. White Papers

No business

7. Any Other Business

7.1 New Publications since last PSC meeting

- Explanatory Memorandum.

The Committee was updated on, and made aware of, QQI documentation which has been published since the last PSC meeting.

7.1a Policy Impact Assessment of the NFQ

- Policy Impact Assessment of the NFQ

An overview of the [Policy Impact Assessment of the NFQ](#) was presented at the meeting. The study set out to capture the impact of the framework. The executive advised that few framework impact studies have been attempted internationally. It was also noted that in 2017 QQI partnered in a [peer learning event](#) on frameworks with Cedefop which attracted researchers and policy makers. The intention is to build on this activity and to do some more systematic analysis on the contribution of frameworks. The Committee noted the main findings of the policy impact assessment. Discussion took place on other potential influences including the EQF 2017 recommendations, the emerging changes in traditional employment practices and the role of qualifications within that activity. It was noted that a stable qualifications framework can help build understanding and confidence in qualifications.

The following publications were presented and discussed:

7.1b [Quality within Higher Education 2017](#) (a summary report)

This is an annual synthesis of findings which helps raise the visibility of quality, improve the flow of information and helps maintain external confidence in higher education.

7.1c [Professional Body Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland](#)

It was noted that QQI has a statutory remit to liaise with professional bodies and that professional body accreditation serves as a form of external quality assurance. The purpose of this research was to scope the field for Irish institutions. The findings have been circulated back to the institutions and accrediting

bodies with questions as to what they would like QQI to do in this space. The Committee noted the findings and that some future work may focus on meeting practice requirements versus innovation.

7.1d Joint QQI / QAA conference - Transnational Education in the European Higher Education Area
QQI is developing bi-lateral relationships in other regions and countries e.g. Asia, China. To foster this, QQI is hosting the Asian QA agencies bi-annual meeting in December 2018. It will be an opportunity to broaden contacts in other parts of Asia. It will also be a forum of the HEIs from all Ireland to meet with representatives from China. This is part of the European agenda as well e.g. joint programmes. QQI may need to develop specific QA guidelines on transnational engagement.

7.1e [UK QAA report on UK transnational education in Ireland](#)

QQI's peer UK agency, the QAA, has published its report on UK transnational education (TNE) in Ireland. The report has found that Ireland is an attractive destination for UK higher education institutions, but a difficult market to enter.

7.2 Annual Self-Assessment Evaluation of Committee Performance

The Executive presented a summary of the responses and this was followed by discussion on various aspects of the findings. The main points raised were how decisions of the PSC influence/inform the Board and if the board would consider feedback to the PSC of the effectiveness of this committee. The members also expressed interest in receiving overviews of QQI's activities and involvement in other areas. The executive will produce a report of findings, conclusions and recommendations and present to the Board.

7.3 QQI Strategy 2019-2021

The Committee was updated on the QQI Strategy process and were informed that the Strategy would be discussed at the next Board meeting, followed by internal QQI meetings with the Senior Management Team, the broader management team and then the plan will be introduced to all staff. It is intended to put the Strategy out for Public Consultation in May and, after review, present the final Strategy to the Minister in August.

7.4 Presentation

The Committee members were updated on 'Reflections on qualifications markets, reforms and regulations in England' with regard to vocational education in England.

The Chair noted that this is the final meeting for Ewart Keep, International Expert, who will step down from the Committee on 19 March 2018. The Chair, on behalf of QQI and the members of the Committee, thanked Ewart for his important input into the work of the Committee to date and wished him the very best for the future.

7.5 The date of the next meeting will be agreed when a new chairperson has been appointed by the Board. A Doodle Poll will be sent to members meetings for 2018 will be circulated in due course.

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