Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)
Notes of meeting of 14 April 2016

Present: Barbara Brittingham (Chair); Maureen Conway; Mary Danagher; Liz Carroll; John Mulcahy; Anne Mangan; Peter Cullen (Key Executive)

Apologies: Sarah Ingle

In attendance: Walter Balfe (QA - QQI); Antoinette Beatty (QA - QQI)

This meeting was held primarily to consider the decision of the Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) at its meeting of 23 February 2016, to refuse to validate three programme applications from three individual providers.

1. **Minutes of PAOC meeting of 22 December 2015**

▪   The Minutes of the PAOC meeting of 22 December 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chair of the Committee.

2. **Negative decisions taken by the PAEC on Programme Validation for confirmation or referral back to the PAEC**

2.1 Briefing Note

i   An update on the PAEC's programme validation refusals, at their meeting of 2 December 2015, was also given. This included the following points:
     - 14 programme applications from 10 individual providers were refused validation
     - the PAOC had referred these decisions back to the PAEC
     - 9 of the 10 providers have since re-submitted their programmes (12 in total)
     - 1 provider intends to re-submit their 2 applications during the summer.

ii.   The briefing note to the committee was presented by the executive. It was confirmed that providers are now shown draft reports from evaluators and invited to correct any factual inaccuracies and to make comments for consideration by the PAEC when making its decision on validation.

iii. It was noted that providers have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to reply to PAEC reports and also welcome the introduction of evaluator panels, to afford them the opportunity to present and defend their programme proposals.

Arising from the discussion on this,

iv. Several committee members posed questions and commented on different aspects of the role of evaluators. These included:
   - the relatively small pool from which evaluators for CAS programmes are normally drawn
   - criteria for sourcing evaluators for validation applications
   - payment for evaluators
   - evaluators' subject matter expertise
   - self-evaluation by providers, prior to applying for validation
   - training for evaluators

v. The committee noted that some evaluations have recently involved site-visits and have selected evaluators from a bigger pool of QQI experts. It observed that a site-visit, where a panel of evaluators meets the applicant, has the advantage that it gives "face to QQI".

vi. The committee noted plans for the phasing-in of the new validation policies and criteria.

   The executive explained that the new QQI policy on validation, will be implemented on a phased basis in the FET sector and that communication with the sector will be an important part of the roll out.

2.2   Validation Refusals

i.   Sales Coach Ltd
     PG19464 - Leisure Facility Supervisory Management

     Committee members reviewed the evaluator's rationale for their recommendation and the PAEC's decision to refuse validation of this programme was CONFIRMED.

ii. NorthWest Training Centre
     PG22097 - Guiding

     Committee members reviewed the evaluator's rationale for their recommendation and the PAEC's decision to refuse validation of this programme was CONFIRMED.

iii. Safetech Safety Professionals
     PG22118 - Health, Safety. Care & Security Skills

     Committee members reviewed the evaluator's rationale for their recommendation and the PAEC's decision to refuse validation of this programme was CONFIRMED.

3. **Revised Terms of Reference**

- Having reviewed the revised Terms of Reference and although supportive of what was stated, the committee agreed it did not have a tracked-changes version to hand.

- The committee's main concern related to the last point under the heading 'Functions' i.e. "make recommendations on the strategic direction of the activities of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)".
  The committee requested clarification on what is intended by this.

- The key executive of the PAOC will consult the chairman of the PAEC about this and will report back to committee members at the next meeting in June.

- A request for the proposed date of issue of the next Annual Report, was made by the chair of the PAOC. The key executive of the PAOC will review past practice and will propose a date, as requested.

4. **PAEC Reports to the QQI Board**

- The QQI executive presented a brief outline of both report documents which related to the PAEC meetings of 2 December 2015 and 23 February 2016.

- Although there were several general questions posed, the main area of concern centred around the time taken to process applications. The executive stated that, while QQI has set a limit of 25 weeks for process time between complete submission and PAEC decision, many of the applications listed in the two reports that showed a processing time of 30 weeks or more. It was explained that many had been caught up in the system due to the non-payment of fees and/or a delay in the submission, and subsequent approval, of PEL arrangements. The executive committed to monitoring the process time for all current and future applications to ensure adherence to the agreed time limit.

5. **Any Other Business**

- It was announced that Diarmuid O'Callaghan's tenure, as a member of the PAOC, has expired. A replacement has not yet been confirmed.