

POLICIES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (PSC)
Tuesday, 18 September, 2014- 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2

Present: James Moore (Chair) - Board Member and Committee Chair

Jan S Levy - International Expert

Ewart Keep - International Expert

Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert

Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert

Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member

Peter Cullen - QQI Key Executive

In attendance: Ann Graves - QQI Secretary

John O'Connor – QQI (for Item 6.1)

Bryan Fields - SOLAS (for Item 7).

Apologies:: Marie Bourke - National Expert

In opening the meeting the Chair noted that Margaret Cullen, Board Member and Vice-Chair of the Committee has stepped down from the PSC owing to work commitments. The Chair will convey thanks to Margaret on behalf of the PSC for her contributions to the work of the committee to date.

The Chair congratulated Anne-Marie Ryan on her new position in the Chief Nursing Office in the Department of Health and on behalf of the PSC wished her every success in the role.

1 Minutes of Meeting of PSC of 6 May 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting of 6 May 2014 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

2.1 The PSC NOTED that the Green Paper on QQI Relations with Professional Bodies has not been published (as had been agreed) and will progress in line with the process outlined in the approved minutes

2.2 The PSC NOTED that following discussions with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) the Green Paper on QQI Relations with Professional Bodies had not been published. The view of the DES is that policy for guidance service is not for QQI to determine, the DES is consulting with statutory bodies and once this process is complete QQI will consider the next steps.

2.3 Other matters arising will be dealt with under the relevant items on the Agenda.

3. Standards Determinations

In order to help engage all members actively in the in the deliberations, selected non-executive PSC members were requested to take a special interest in one or two documents from the agenda and presentation to the meeting on these documents 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 included 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 – Level 6 Component Award in Building Energy Rating Assessment (Dwellings)

The PSC NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new awards standards for Building Energy Rating Assessment (Dwellings).

The PSC NOTED the collaboration between SEAI as the statutory body with responsibility for the occupational standard and QQI on the educational standard and welcomed this as a model for the future. .

3.2 Awards Standards – Level 5 Certificates in Software Development and in Computer Systems and Networks and their associated Component Awards

The PSC NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new award standards for Software Development and Computer Systems and Networks and their associated Component Award at NFQ Level 5.

Awards Standards – Level 6 Certificates in Software Development and in Computer Systems and Networks and their associated Component Awards

The PSC NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new award standards for Software Development and Computer Systems and Networks and their associated Component Award at NFQ Level 6.

The PSC NOTED the interim arrangements for recognition within the NFQ of further education and training awards made by awarding bodies other than QQI, awards recognised under these arrangements may be used for exemptions in QQI validated programmes leading to the new Software Development and Computer Systems and Networks awards.

The PSC AGREED that cross linking standards with the EQF and discussion on related joint European initiatives would form a thematic item for a future meeting of the Committee.

4. Policies

Selected non-executive PSC members were requested to take a special interest in one or two documents and make a presentation to the meeting on these documents for the purpose of leading off the discussions. All members were still required to read and consider all the documents on the agenda.

The green/white paper presentations by PSC members included observations on

- Soundness of the case for a white/green paper
- Consistency with QQI's strategy and policy framework and
- Clarity of the green papers—will they lead to the important issues being aired during consultation
- Clarity of the draft policy, procedures and criteria in white papers—is this ready for recommendation to the Board now noting that minor changes may be made following public consultation
- Questions about the paper that warrant discussion at Committee

The PSC NOTED the current policy development schedule and the 2014 Policies Snapshot. This working document will remain a standing item on the Agenda for future meetings.

5. Green Papers

There were no Green Papers for presentation to the PSC.

6. White Papers

6.1 Modified White Paper - Code of Practice for providers of programmes to International Learners (Explanatory Memorandum) (Policy on Authorisation – updated White Paper) (Code of Practice) (QA Guidelines for ELT)

The PSC NOTED the White Paper presented and considered the observations made particularly in relation to implementation. The QQI Executive will take on board the feedback from the PSC. Following discussion the PSC AGREED to refer the Code, Guidelines and White Paper on Authorisation to use the IEM to the QQI Board (with the following observations) and that the Code of Practice and ELT QA Guidelines may be published for consultation.

- Points for Clarification:
 - How does this link with existing QA process
 - Ideally same assessment, declaration etc.
 - Fees undetermined.
 - Where is financial stability assessed?
 - Speed of implementation
 - How quickly can this be mandatory?
 - What are the implications of the phasing?
 - How are bodies like universities treated?
 - Responsibility for behaviour of agents?
- Possible controversial issues:
 - Staff must have a level 7 degree and an ELT certificate – what are the implications for current staff?
 - Monitoring of attendance may be problematic for some.
 - Premises must be accessible
 - Protection of Enrolled Learners.
 - High stakes status of IEM (linked to immigration policy) and potential pressure to lower standards.

6.2 QA Policy and Criteria for Making Awards

The PSC NOTED the White Paper presented and considered the observations made. Following discussion the PSC AGREED to recommend the QA Policy and Criteria for Making Awards to the QQI Board and therefore it can now be published for consultation subject to the amendments discussed and the inclusion of clarification in relation to Appendix 1.

6.3 QA Policy and Criteria for Determining Awards Standards

The PSC NOTED the White Paper presented and considered the observations made. Following discussion the PSC AGREED to recommend the QA Policy and Criteria for Determining Awards

Standards to the QQI Board and therefore it can now be published for consultation subject to the inclusion of an explanatory memorandum in parallel.

6.4 Overarching QA Guidelines

The PSC NOTED the White Paper presented and considered the observations made. Following discussion the PSC AGREED to recommend the Overarching QA Guidelines to the QQI Board and therefore it may now be published for consultation.

6.5 Overarching Policy on Monitoring

The PSC NOTED the White Paper presented and considered the observations made. Following discussion the PSC AGREED to recommend the Overarching Policy on Monitoring to the QQI Board and therefore it may now be published for consultation.

Following discussion on the suite of policies presented the PSC AGREED that future policies presented should include details describing the main issues or controversies that emerged during consultation (indicating if there are none) and the executive response to each.

The PSC also NOTED that an overview and directory of policies would be useful to indicate how the individual policies contribute to a coherent approach. .

7. Presentation of FE Strategy

The PSC welcomed the comprehensive presentation on the FE Strategy by SOLAS including the implementation plan.

8. AOB

The PSC NOTED the approaches in relation to the two activities around apprenticeships. The PSC further NOTED the establishment of an Apprenticeship Council by the DES hosted by SOLAS.

The PSC NOTED that the Fourth Meeting, scheduled for 25 November 2014 had been deferred. The PSC AGREED a date for the fourth meetings of the PSC on **10 December 2014** from 10am.

The PSC AGREED a schedule of dates for meetings in 2015 as follows:

Wednesday, 4 February 2015

Thursday, 16 April 2015

Thursday, 11 June 2015 (it is envisaged that this meeting will be a stocktake one)

Note of PSC Meeting 18/09/15

Thursday, 29 September 2015

Thursday, 3 December 2015

Meetings will, in general, commence at 10am until 1.30pm