

POLICIES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (PSC)
Thursday 16 April, 2015 - - 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

Marie Bourke - National Expert

Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert

Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member

Peter Cullen - QQI Key Executive

In attendance: Ann Graves - QQI Secretary

Niamh Lenehan – QQI (for Item 7.2)

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed the members.

1 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 10 December 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting of 10 December 2014, amended to include a footnote in relation to minute 8.2 as follows “Some Institutions may find monitoring of student attendance problematic”, were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

2.1 The Committee NOTED the simplified illustration (prepared by the QQI executive) of the impact of the new professional award-type descriptors on designated trades. The Committee welcomed the diagram which clarified the processes past and future but NOTED that the process applies to apprenticeships and may not be appropriate to other programmes.

2.2 Any 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 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 5 Certificate in Office Informatics including a Capstone Component Award Standard

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made.

The Committee discussed the effectiveness of consultation process during which more details about the consultation and including during and prior to the development process were outlined by the QQI Executive along with some of the context for the process (e.g. the motivation to develop the new standard).

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new awards standard for Office Informatics including the Capstone Component at NFQ Level 5.

3.2 Awards Standards – NFQ Level 5 Certificate in Media Production, NFQ Level 5 Certificate in Film and Television Production and NFQ Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Film and Television Production and associated Component Awards

The PSC NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made.

The PSC AGREED that more information around the actual process relating to standards determination would be included in future papers presented to the Committee as an evidence trail supporting the rigour and robustness of the development process such as information

sources referenced by development groups but not cited explicitly in the awards standards.

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new award standards for NFQ Level 5 Certificate in Media Production, NFQ Level 5 Certificate in Film and Television Production and NFQ Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Film and Television Production and associated Component Awards Standards.

3.3 Awards Standards – NFQ Level 5 Special Purpose in Shallow Water Pool Lifeguarding Operations, NFQ Level 6 Special Purpose in Beach Lifeguarding Operations, Deep Water Pool Lifeguarding Operations and Inland Open Water Lifeguarding Operations and associated Component Awards Standards

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. While there was no response to the public consultation in relation to the lifeguarding award standards the lead by Irish Water Safety, the statutory body established to promote water safety in Ireland, in the development, the strength of the expert group and their knowledge of the subject area gave confidence that the development process was sound.

The Committee NOTED the issues raised by the legacy processes, for example, in relation to Special Purpose awards there was a need to express the standard using Minor awards even when it is the sole constituent minor (this for technical reasons, it is intended that development of new Special Purpose awards will not have this requirement, future presentations to the Committee would not then include a wrapped minor when there is only one.

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new award standards for NFQ Level 5 Shallow Water Pool Lifeguarding Operations, NFQ Level 6 Special Purpose in Beach Lifeguarding Operations, Deep Water Pool Lifeguarding Operations and Inland Open Water Lifeguarding Operations and associated Component Awards Standards.

3.4 Awards Standard –NFQ Level 5 minor award specification Maths for Information Technology

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. It was noted in particular that the format of the learning outcomes looks more like a curriculum than a statement of overarching learning outcomes. The format is similar to that of the recently adopted Math for STEM award standard.

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new award standard for Maths for Information Technology at NFQ Level 5.

4. Subject Guidelines

4.1 Guidelines for Pre-higher Education Foundation Awards for International Students

The Committee NOTED that the item had been withdrawn and would be discussed under item 5 of the Agenda.

5. Policy Development

5.1 Policy Gantt Chart – Standing Item

The Committee NOTED the draft policy schedule presented by the Executive.

5.2 QQI Comprehensive Policy Development Programme Update.

Items 5.2 and 7.1 were taken together.

The Committee NOTED the implications of the January 2015 High Court ruling against QQI. It noted that QQI has been advised that it should not rely on an implied award recognition function. This limits the awards that may be “recognised within the framework”. Functions that depend on awards being “recognised within the framework” cannot be executed unless the award is already recognised within the framework. Public providers (who are subject to section 48) cannot legally enter into arrangements with awarding bodies whose awards are not recognised within the framework. Notwithstanding the legal advice received the committee heard that QQI might have an implied power to recognise awards. The matter is with the Department for Education and Skills and the Office of the Attorney General.

The Committee further noted that QQI lacks an awarding body recognition function and support for this. The Executive had previously recognised this problem and had proposed an amendment to legislation to enable QQI to recognise awards and awarding bodies. Ireland’s framework was considered exemplary in its capacity to recognise – currently without the power to recognise awards QQI cannot implement this function of the framework.

The Committee NOTED the urgency of the change in legislation in line with the amendment proposed by QQI to the Department of Education and Skills being implemented and the potential fallout in both the short and longer term. The Chair AGREED to convey the concerns of the Committee to the Board.

6 Green Papers

There were no Green Papers for presentation to the Committee.

7. White Papers

7.1 Interim policy on the recognition of awards within the NFO

The comments under Item 5.2 also apply to this Item.

The Committee NOTED the Interim policy presented and that it would be considered by the QQI Board at its meeting on 24 April 2015.

7.2 Consultation feedback on the whitepapers approved at the 10 December meeting PSC/A5/7.2

The Committee NOTED that the public consultation had closed on the White Paper on Facilitating Recognition, feedback was positive and receptive to the policy.

11 Any Other Business

The Committee NOTED the documents circulated on the update on current approach to review of standards. The executive advised that the documents will help prime discussion for the June meeting of the Committee.

The Committee NOTED that the meeting scheduled for June 2015 will be a full day meeting, with one session dedicated to a stocktake meeting. A change of date may be required to facilitate full participation and the executive will circulate a doodle poll, members of the Committee were requested to hold the 11 June as it may not be possible to secure a date that suits everyone.