Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the seventeenth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 24 April 2015 at 10.00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 4th Floor, 10 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2.

Present:	Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)
	Dr. Padraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
	Ms. Claire Byrne (Secretary)
	Ms. Una Buckley
	Ms. Mary Danagher
	Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan
	Mr. James Moore
Apologies:	Mr. Kevin Donoghue
	Dr. Barbara Brittingham
	Ms. Joanne Harmon
In attendance:	Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
	Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items (part of) 4, 5 and 6)
	Mr. Ultan Tuite (Item 4)

INTRODUCTION

The Board agreed the Agenda for the meeting was acceptable and adopted same.

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 13 FEBRUARY 2015**

   The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 13 February 2015 were **confirmed and signed**.

2. **NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 13 FEBRUARY 2015**

   The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 13 February 2015* for publication on the QQI website.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1. Board Member Vacancy

The Board noted the Chairperson's update on the recruitment process for a new Board Member. The Board noted that the Public Appointments Service Panel (which included the QQI Chairperson as a member) met on 14 April to assess the applications received. Following the meeting, a shortlist of candidates who met the essential criteria had been forwarded to the Minister for Education and Skills for her consideration. The Board noted that the vacancy has been referred to the Department as a matter of urgency and the Chairperson hopes to hear regarding an appointment shortly. The Board noted the Chairperson and Executive's satisfaction with the transparency and efficiency of the appointment process to date.

3.2. Board Meeting Agendas

The Board noted that the matter of 'Notification of QQI Mentions in the Media' will be a standard item on Board Meeting Agendas in the future, beginning with the meeting scheduled for 12 June 2015. The Board noted that the recently assigned Information Officer was working on the matter.

3.3. State Grant

The Board noted that the Chairperson had written on 30 March 2015 to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) regarding the confirmation of the State Grant for 2015 and the Board's concerns in relation to the reduction in comparison with previous years.

3.4. Succession Planning

The Board noted that the Chairperson had met with the Secretary General of DES in early March. The Chairperson updated the Board on progress to date. The Board noted the matter had been considered by the Departments of Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform and written confirmation of a decision was awaited.

The Board also noted that under the terms of the draft Management Framework Agreement (MFA) between QQI and DES, the Chairperson and the Chief Executive

would meet at an early date with the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of DES for an inaugural MFA Meeting.

3.5. <u>Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the HEA</u>

The Board noted that the launch of the MoU with the HEA had taken place in the Clock Tower, at the Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street on 2 April at which Board Members were present. The Board noted that there had also been a strong staff attendance. The Board noted that an implementation plan of action for the MoU was being worked through by both parties.

3.6. <u>Institutional Review - RCSI</u>

The Board noted that following receipt and consideration of the one year Follow-up Report of the Institutional Review of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), the Review and Enhancement Manager and the Head of Quality Assurance Services had met with the Director of Quality Enhancement at RCSI and an update on further progress was expected shortly.

4. **AUDIT AND RISK**

The Board noted the documents entitled **Audit and Risk**.

The Chairperson requested the Executive to continue to try to tailor and improve the accompanying cover papers for Board items especially in terms of highlighting key points of note for Board Members. The Board also requested the Executive to further explore methods of highlighting changes to versions of documents circulated for its attention.

4.1. <u>Financial Statements</u>

The Board noted that the QQI accountant had been in attendance at the Audit Committee Meeting on 27 March.

The Board noted that the draft Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 had been cleared by the QQI Audit Committee and had since been amended to include the FRS17 Statement. The Board noted this was the first set of 12 month Financial Statements for the organisation, the previous Financial Statements had

covered the 14 month period following QQI's establishment. The Board noted the Executive's responses to any queries raised during the course of its discussion. The Board noted that in relation to a point raised on Contingent Liability, the matter relates to legacy liabilities arising from previous FETAC Financial Statements.

The Board **approved** the QQI Financial Statements for 2014 in principle, subject to there being no material changes, for signature by the Chairperson and the Chief Executive.

4.2. Internal Audit Reports

The Board noted and discussed the following Internal Audit Reports which were considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 27 March:

a) Financial Reporting Cycle

The Board noted the Report's recommendation in relation to the Executive extending its existing insurance cover to include additional areas e.g. Directors' and Officers' Liability, Professional Indemnity and Legal Expenses Insurance and noted the Executive's intention to explore its options.

b) Initial Access to Programme Validation Cycle

The Board noted that the Initial Access to Programme Validation Process is still relatively new and will probably require further resourcing in the future. The Board noted that the Executive, as well as reviewing the Policy in light of experience gained since the process opened, intends to survey potential applicants who have attended the Initial Validation briefings to date. The Board noted that the Executive also intends to seek feedback from the first applicant to successfully complete the process of becoming a provider of QQI Awards.

c) Programme Validation Cycle

The Board noted the large number of programmes validated by QQI last year, over 750. The Board noted the measures taken by the Executive to date to mitigate against the risk of control of devolution of responsibility to providers and Programme Approval Agreements. The Board suggested that attention

needs to be given by providers to the differences between validation of programmes, professional accreditation of programmes and the licensing of professions. The Board noted that corporate responsibility had been re-enforced in some sectors at QQI's behest.

The Board **approved** the following Internal Audit Reports as recommended by the Audit Committee:

- *Financial Reporting Cycle*
- *Initial Access to Programme Validation Cycle*
- *Programme Validation Cycle*

The Board welcomed the fact that the QQI Internal Audit Reports have addressed areas of potential high risk for QQI.

The Board stated its satisfaction that appropriate internal audit measures are in place since the establishment of QQI and thanked the Executive for the significant volume of work completed in this area to date.

4.3. Risk Register and Risk Management

The Board noted the Risk Register, which had been revised on foot of discussions at the February 2015 Board Meeting. The Board noted the amendments and revisions made to the QQI Risk Management Policy and QQI Risk Management Framework following a mid-term desk review of the policy. The Board noted that the Risk Register Process was now appended to the Risk Management Policy.

The Board **approved** the following Risk Management documents:
- *QQI Risk Register*
- *QQI Risk Management Framework*
- *QQI Risk Management Policy 2015*

4.4. <u>Items for Noting</u>

The Board noted the following items arising from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 27 March 2015:

- The Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting of 23 January 2015

- The C&AG Management Letter of 16 March 2015

- The C&AG invitation (of 19 March 2015) to attend a half day briefing session for Audit Committee members in the Dublin Castle Conference Centre in May and the intended attendance at the event by two members of the QQI Audit Committee and,

- The Board also noted outline details of an upcoming event (on Board Reviews – Identifying Ways to Enhance Effectiveness) hosted by the IPA Governance Forum on 15 May, further details of which would be circulated to Board Members by the Head of Audit and Procurement.

5. **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

The Board noted the update on **Budget and Finance** which included the draft Budget for 2015.

The Board noted that the draft Budget was produced on a cash basis. The Board noted the anticipated increases in income and expenditure for the year. The Board noted that contingencies were in place in relation to legal fees etc. arising from liabilities (contingent liabilities) outlined under the previous item (Audit and Risk).

The Board noted the expected reduction in expenditure in the area of ICT following several years of significant work in winding down legacy systems and obsolete technology. The Board noted the addition earlier this year of an external member to the ICT Steering Group as well as the establishment of a Change Advisory Board to assist in efficiencies in this area. The Board satisfied itself that appropriate internal controls and systems are in place in relation to ICT expenditure.

The Board noted that there was still uncertainty in relation to projected spending in some areas, e.g. much depended on when the IEM process was likely to come on stream and the winding down of ACELS would also have an effect on expenditure in 2015.

The Board noted that the Executive is proposing a modified level of the Relationship Fee for higher education institutions to better reflect the relative level of service provided by QQI to the self-awarding and delegated authority sectors.

The Board **approved** the QQI Budget for 2015.

The Board noted that an update on income and expenditure for 2015 would feature on the agenda of the next Board Meeting scheduled for 12 June 2015.

6. **UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

The Board noted the **Update on Human Resources**.

Items omitted from this note.

6.3. Implementation of PMDS and Organisational Development Programme
The Board noted that PMDS and the Staff Mobility Scheme are still suspended at present. The Board noted that Staff Workshops on the development of the Strategy Statement 2016-2018 had taken place on 15 and 16 April.

7. **COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

The Board noted the document entitled **Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**.

7.1. Policy and Criteria for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications
The Board noted that the draft Policy sets out QQI's approach to facilitating the academic recognition of foreign qualifications as well as setting policy for performing its role as the Irish ENIC-NARIC Centre (European Network of Information Centres; National Academic Recognition Information Centre).

The Board **adopted** the *Policy and Criteria for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*.

7.2. Recognition of Professional Awards

The Board noted that following the judgement in the High Court in January last in relation to the reforms arising from the deliberations of the Task Force on Students Affected by Private College Closures, a number of concerns were raised in relation to potential gaps in the 2012 Act which has certain implications for recognition of awards in the National Framework of Qualifications. The Board noted that legal advice had been received by QQI and passed to the Department of Education and Skills who were awaiting their own legal advice through the Office of the Attorney General.

The Board noted it was possible for gaps to be covered through new legislation or through the addition of a separate piece appended to legislation within another Bill currently going through the legislative drafting system.

The Board noted the report of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) Chairperson and noted the grave concern expressed by the Committee in relation to this matter. The issue and its implications for many providers were discussed at length at the PSC Meeting held on 16 April.

The Board requested that the Chairperson and Executive convey the strong concern raised by the Policies and Standards Committee, the Executive and the Board to the highest level possible within the DES. The Board noted that the Chairperson intended to add the matter to the agenda of the upcoming MFA meeting with the Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General of the DES. The Board noted that the legislative matter was also impinging on the establishment of the International Education Mark (IEM).

7.3. IEM Update

The Board noted the update on the IEM provided by the Executive and noted the Executive's hope that there may be some developments in the coming weeks.

The Board requested the Executive to circulate a brief on the situation, as soon as the necessary clarification had been received – outlining for the Board, the clarification, consequences and latest state of play etc.

The Board noted that the current certification print run underway was the first run of new QQI Award Certificates.

8. **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Board noted the documents relating to **Strategic Development**.

8.1. Draft QQI Annual Report 2014

The Board noted the draft format of the Annual Report for 2014 which was intended to give the Board a sense of the direction the Executive was taking in drafting the report. The Board approved the Executive to proceed with the draft Report on that basis and noted that the final draft would be presented to the Board for its approval at the next Board Meeting scheduled for 12 June. The Board noted that Members should send any comments on the Report format in writing to the Secretary of the Board.

8.2. Corporate Plan 2015

The Board noted the progress report and summary dashboard on the 2015 Corporate Plan.

The Board noted the areas that were currently at risk for completion, mainly due to delays arising from pending legislative amendments linked to the High Court case. The Board noted that the Executive had decided to delay work on the development of guidance material for employer engagement following confirmation of an OECD National Policy Review (of Entrepreneurship Activity in Higher Education) which is due to take place later in the year. It would be premature to progress the work in advance of the outcome of the review.

8.3. Strategy Statement 2016-2018

The Board noted the updated Strategy Statement incorporating feedback received from Board Members at their Workshop held on 27 March 2015.

The Board also noted the survey on the draft Strategy Statement which was circulated to members of the Consultative Forum. Feedback received from this survey together with the draft Strategy Statement would be discussed at the next meeting of the Consultative Forum scheduled for Tuesday, 28 April 2015. The Board noted that a number of Board Members would be attending the Forum meeting.

The Board noted that once contributions from all areas had been collated and considered, the Executive would present the final draft Strategy Statement to the Board at its June Meeting for approval prior to submission to the Minister for Education and Skills.

9. **BOARD PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

The Board noted the documents entitled **Board Performance and Evaluation**.

The Board noted the recommendations collated from the discussion on the Board Performance Evaluation at the Board Workshop held on 27 March. The Board noted some points from the recent IPA Governance Forum seminar on Roles and Responsibilities of State and Non-profit Board Members which were relevant to the discussion.

The Board noted that many of the events hosted by the Governance Forum, details of which are circulated to Board Members by the Executive, often clash with QQI Board or Committee commitments and the Secretary undertook to feedback to the Forum organisers and suggest that an alternative schedule be considered.

The Board noted the Chairperson and Executive's re-iterance of any support Board Members may require, be in terms of information, advice, technical assistance etc., as outlined in the Code of Conduct for Board Meetings, can be arranged by the Executive. Board Members were asked to inform the Secretary to the Board of any requirements they may have.

The Board **approved** the recommendations arising from the Board Performance Evaluation.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

The Board noted the documents entitled **Approach to Communications Strategy**.

The Board noted that QQI's Communications Strategy is developed in conjunction with the Strategy Statement 2016-2018 and the discussions around the recent Board Performance Evaluation. The Board noted that it was encouraging for the Communications Team to get Board support on this matter. The Board noted that this was an early draft of the project plan to give the Board a sense of where the QQI communications strategy is headed. The draft strategy has been developed further in house since the document was circulated to the Board. The Board noted that the Communications Plan was focusing on a number of key themes: NFQ, QQI Corporate, Information (Internal and External) as well as around the regulatory aspect of QQI's work. The Board noted that work was beginning on reviewing what had been achieved to date and in engaging with stakeholders on what outputs have been effective. The Board noted that resources was a key factor in the success of any communications strategy. The Board noted that the Executive wanted to explore digital services. A Board Member requested that a dialogical approach should be a key factor within the Executive's work with stakeholders. The Board noted that provision of information to learners is a separate yet equally important area of focus. The Board noted that a final draft Communications Strategy would be provided for the June Board Meeting for approval.

11. MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

The Board noted the **Update on Memorandums of Understanding**.

11.1. <u>Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Higher Education Authority (HEA)</u>
The Board noted that the first meeting of the Forum established under the MoU to support QQI and the HEA in the implementation of the MoU – membership of the Forum included the DES, IOTI, IUA and USI – had taken place on 5 March with further meetings scheduled for May, September and December.

The Board noted that there are intentions for the establishment of further MoUs with other agencies e.g. SOLAS – but it is unlikely to happen in the short term while that agency is still in a start-up phase. The Board noted the MoUs established to date had proved to be very beneficial and noted the suggestion of the Executive that MoUs with similar agencies in Malaysia and China may yet be considered.

11.2. <u>Management Framework Agreement (MFA) with DES</u>

The Board noted that the Executive had presented an initial draft MFA with the Department of Education and Skills at its Board Meeting in September 2014 and the current version presented included updates and amendments following ongoing discussions with the DES. The Board **agreed** that it should endorse the final agreement being the first year of its implementation. The Board discussed the current draft and suggested amendments for inclusion. The Board **agreed** that the Executive and the Chairperson should draft the suggested recommendations and amendments and forward to the Department of Education and Skills in advance of the review meeting where the proposed changes can be further considered at that meeting.

The Board noted that the Executive was in contact with the Department to schedule the first MFA review meeting between the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, the Chief Executive and the Chairperson of QQI. The Board noted that the Chairperson would draft an agenda of items he wished to discuss at the meeting. The Board noted that QQI was the first of the agencies under the aegis of the DES to go through the MFA process. The Board noted that the MFA and its scheduled review meetings would provide opportunities to bring Board concerns to the Department. The Board noted that the Chairperson may attend two out of the four scheduled review meetings.

12. **REVIEWS**

The Board noted the Executive's verbal update on the Review of Research Validation at Institute of Technology, Tralee.

The Board noted the outcome of the Review process and noted that the process is now complete.

13. FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Board noted the verbal update on recent engagement with the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS). The Board noted that the Joint QQI/Community and Voluntary Sector Working Group had met on 3 March and 20 April 2015 and noted the update from the Executive on the meetings and on the feedback received from the independent facilitator. The Board noted the Executive was pleased with the interaction, engagement and progress to date.

The Board noted that the Executive is planning a reclassification of providers in the FET sector to ensure correct classifications. Under the processes of the former FET awards council, providers self-selected their category upon registration. The Executive stressed the importance of ensuring that providers within the Community and Voluntary (CVS) sector, for instance, are correctly categorised prior to the commencement of the phased re-engagement process. Re-engagement with the Community and Voluntary sector is likely to commence in 2016.

14. ITEMS FOR NOTING

The Board noted the **Items for Noting**.

14.1. Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)
The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the *Programme and Awards Executive Committee* held on 18 February and 14 April 2015.

14.2. Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards
The Board noted that the first applicant under this process has successfully completed the process of initial validation. The Board noted that following the approval of both its quality assurance procedures and validation of its initial programme, this provider is eligible to provide validated programmes leading to QQI awards.

14.3. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the verbal report of the meeting of the *Policies and Standards Committee* held on 16 April 2015. The Board noted that the Committee has scheduled a Policy Strategy Review session as part of its September 2015 meeting, the Committee hopes to have a clearer view of the Policy Development landscape by then.

14.4. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from 11 February to 17 April 2015).

14.5. Draft Board Agenda (June 2015) and Rolling Board Agenda 2015

The Board noted the draft Agenda for the Board Meeting scheduled for 12 June 2015 and requested the Executive to add an update on the Communications Strategy to the document.

15. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 12 June 2015** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Following discussion at the Board Performance Evaluation Workshop and again at the meeting, the Board noted that the number of non-Executive Members on the Board was proving to be a limitation in terms of dealing with the volume of work coming through the Board and servicing Committees of the Board. The Board noted that the Chairperson intended to raise the Board's concerns about the membership issue with the Department at the upcoming MFA Meeting and the Executive would explore the options arising from the discussions.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____