Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the twenty-fourth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 10 June 2016 at 10.00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present:	Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)
	Dr. Padraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
	Ms. Claire Byrne (Secretary)
	Dr. Barbara Brittingham
	Ms. Una Buckley
	Ms. Mary Danagher
	Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan
	Mr. Thomas McDermott
Apologies:	Ms. Joanne Harmon
	Mr. Jack Leahy
	Mr. James Moore
In attendance:	Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
	Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 7, 8 and 9)
	Mr. Ultan Tuite (Items 5 and 6)

INTRODUCTION

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

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 15 APRIL 2016**

    The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 15 April 2016 were **confirmed and signed**.

2. **NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 15 APRIL 2016**

    The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 15 April 2016* for publication on the QQI website.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

   3.1. Management Framework Agreement (MFA) 2016

   The Board noted that the MFA Mid-Year Review meeting, involving the Chairperson and CEO of QQI and the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been scheduled for 20 June.

4. **DRAFT BOARD AGENDA**

   The Board noted the **Draft Board Agenda (September 2016)**.

   The Board noted the current draft agenda for the next Board Meeting scheduled for 30 September 2016. Board Members **agreed**, as per discussions at the Board Performance Workshop held on 15 April, to contact the Chairperson should they wish to add any items to the agenda prior to the next Board Meeting.

5. **RISK**

   The Board noted the update on **Risk**.

   The Board noted that the Audit Committee meeting of 27 May 2016 had been postponed to 9 June, the evening prior to the Board Meeting and the Audit Committee Chairperson and the Director of Governance and ICT provided a verbal update on the Committee's deliberations and recommendations.

   The Board noted and discussed the draft QQI Risk Register. The Board noted several recommendations for amendments as a result of the Audit Committee's consideration of the document, in particular, the recommendation that a primary risk owner be identified for multi-Directorate risks to ensure appropriate oversight in those cross-organisational areas.

   The Board noted the risks identified as High Level were receiving priority attention from the Risk Management Team. The Board noted one major risk relates to the amendments required to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, is outside the control of QQI. However, the Executive is continuing to consult with the Department on its amendments. The Board noted the Chair's intention to raise the

legislative amendments with the Secretary General at the MFA Review Meeting later this month. The Board noted that the matter had also been discussed recently with the new Minister for Education and Skills. The Board noted that the legislative amendments had been the main focus of the QQI submission to the Department's call for submissions to its Statement of Strategy 2016-2018.

The Board was satisfied with the progress which the Executive had made in identifying QQI's risks and controls since its initial risk register was developed in the 2012/2013 period and the progress which had been made in establishing appropriate controls. The Board noted that the Executive was making efforts to further develop controls and by doing so, reduce the categorisation of some of the risks.

The Board **approved** the Risk Register subject to the changes suggested.

The Board noted the intention of the Executive to present the Risk Register to the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis for review and to the Board for consideration on an annual basis. The Board would receive updates on progress through the regular reports of Audit Committee meetings throughout the year.

6. **AUDIT AND RISK**

   The Board noted the documents relating to **Audit and Risk**.

   The Board noted the verbal update on the Audit Committee meeting held on 9 June 2016 provided by the Audit Committee Chairperson and the Director of Governance and ICT.

   6.1. Internal Audit Reports

   The Board noted the following Internal Audit Reports:
   - Procurement Audit
   - Qualifications and NARIC Audit
   - Audit Testing of Risk Register Controls
   - Draft Internal Audit Plan 2017-2019

The Board noted that, in the course of its considerations of the Internal Audit Report on the Qualifications and NARIC Audit, the Committee had discussed the classification of the statutory obligation on providers to make certain information known to learners prior to enrolment (Section 67 of the 2012 Act) and suggested that it be reclassified as a higher priority. The Executive replied to the Board's query around QQI's statutory obligations in relation to this Section and will consider what further action could be envisaged to meet these obligations. It was also suggested that perhaps, further consideration should be given to the legislation and the proposed amendments in light of the discussions at Audit Committee and Board level. The Board noted the Audit Committee's intention to reclassify the issue.

The Board **approved** the four Internal Audit Reports listed above subject to the amendment(s) (to the Qualifications and NARIC Audit IA report) proposed by the Audit Committee at its meeting the previous evening.

6.2.   Tender

The Board noted that QQI's current contract for the outsourcing of certain Internal Audit services is due to expire at the end of August 2016.   The Board noted that the Executive would be availing of the National Framework for Accounting, Audit and Financial and Economic Services established by the Office of Government Procurement when seeking outsourced internal audit services. The Internal Audit Services contract will be awarded for a period of three years and will include audits such as Purchasing and Procurement, Legal and Compliance, ICT Controls and Security Audit, ICT Systems, the Annual System of Internal Financial Controls (SIFC) and any other appropriate audits which may arise.

The Board noted and **approved** the draft Supplementary Request for Tender (SRFT) for Internal Audit Services.

6.3.   Items for Noting

The Board noted the draft minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 1 April 2016.

The Board noted that some progress had been made in relation to the Directors' and Officers' Liability insurance and noted that the Executive would continue to liaise with the Department towards securing the necessary insurance cover.

7. **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

The Board noted the documents relating to **Budget and Finance**.

7.1. Financial Report

The Board noted the Financial Report for the three months ended 31 March 2016. The Board noted that the Executive would continue to make adjustments to expenditure coding to ensure expenditure is properly categorised to individual Units as devolved budgeting is rolled out.

7.2. ICT Expenditure

The Board noted the proposal for the extension and/or procurement of contracts for ICT Contract Resources for the six month period from the end of July 2016 for software and maintenance work in accordance with QQI's Purchasing and Procurement Policy, subject to contract. The Board **approved** the extension as outlined.

8. **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

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

The Board noted the Progress Report for Quarter 1 of the 2016 Corporate Plan. The Board noted that the Executive and Planning Office were satisfied that all Quarter 1 deliverables were completed. The Board noted that the Executive expects there to be some minor slippage on timelines for a small number of projects planned for delivery within Quarter 2 and the Executive would provide details where any future quarterly progress is not in line with corporate planning.

9. **HUMAN RESOURCES**

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

Item omitted from this note.

10. **REVIEWS**

The Board noted the document entitled **Section 46 Review of Validated Programmes at Named Provider**.

The Board noted that, on foot of deliberations at its meeting of 15 April, the Board approved the proposed withdrawal of validation of programmes leading to QQI Awards offered by Named Provider. The Board's decision had been communicated to the provider on 18 April. Under Section 47(2) of the 2012 Act, the provider has one month from receipt of formal notice of the proposed withdrawal of validation in which to make observations on the reasons for the proposed withdrawal. The Board noted the observations which had been received from the provider on 17 May. The Board **confirmed** their decision to withdraw validation of programmes under Section 47(1) of the 2012 Act and the Board noted the panel report would be published on the QQI website shortly.

The Board confirmed that the withdrawal of validation will take effect on 5 September 2016 in order to facilitate the completion of the current cohort of learners and noted that the provider will be responsible for activating its arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners once the withdrawal of validation takes effect.

11. **BOARD PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

The Board noted the document relating to the **Board Performance Evaluation**.

A facilitated Board Performance Evaluation Workshop was held prior to the Board Meeting on 15 April. The Board noted the action plan arising from the evaluation process. The Board **agreed** that the Executive would report on progress on the actions at the November 2016 Board Meeting in advance of the Board Performance Evaluation for 2016.

The Board noted the Executive's request that the Board continue to provide feedback on Board papers and where they are or are not meeting the Board's requirements for information.

The Board noted that the Chairperson and Executive had, on foot of the Board Performance Evaluation Workshop, discussed the possible extension of the scheduled November Board Meeting to incorporate a corporate planning workshop on the afternoon of 24 November. The next meeting of the Consultative Forum is scheduled for the morning of 24 November, to which Board members are invited and the rescheduled annual meeting of the Board and Committee Chairpersons will take place on the afternoon of 25 November, following that morning's Board Meeting.

The Board noted that the meeting of the QQI Consultative Forum held on 31 May which had as its main theme 'Qualifications Frameworks towards 2030', had been very useful and informative.

12. **RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS (DES)**

The Board noted the documents entitled **Relations with the Department of Education and Skills**.

12.1. Meetings with the Department of Education and Skills

The Board noted that the newly appointed Minister for Education and Skills had requested a meeting on 1 June with the Chairperson and Chief Executive at which the Deputy Secretary General of the Department and other officials were also present. The Chairperson reported that it had been a useful meeting involving a range of topics including the Review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and the legislative amendments.

The Board noted that the Minister and the Secretary General of the Department had met with the Heads of Agencies under the remit of DES on 20 May at which the Chief Executive had been present. Two major items mentioned during the course of the meeting included the DES organisational review of QQI and the Review of Quality in Higher Education.

The Board noted that the MFA Mid-Year Review meeting was scheduled for 20 June with the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of DES and the next quarterly meeting of Heads of Agencies and the MAC Group was scheduled for 28 June.

12.2. DES Statement of Strategy 2016-2018

The Board noted the final version of the QQI submission to the Department of Education and Skills Statement of Strategy 2016-2018. It was noted that the call for submissions had issued on 23 May with a deadline of 8 June 2016. In developing its submission, the Executive consulted with staff on the initial draft before the document was circulated to Board Members for their views. The Executive thanked the Board for providing feedback within the tight timeframe. The Board noted that the submission will be published on the QQI website.

13. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

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

13.1. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between QQI and SOLAS

The Board noted the update on development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SOLAS. The Board noted that the High Level Group of both agencies had met on 17 May to discuss the latest draft of the MoU.

The Board noted that the MoU Working Group had arranged meetings with the two key stakeholders associated with this MoU, ETBI on 8 June and with DES officials later in June. This provides both stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback prior to the finalisation of the MoU. The Board noted that ETBI had welcomed the consultation opportunity.

The Board noted that the draft MoU was still on track to be considered for approval by the Board at its September meeting. The Board noted that consideration was being given to the implementation element of the MoU and establishing a continuous engagement with relevant stakeholders.

13.2. <u>Memorandum of Understanding between QQI and the HEA</u>

The Board noted that the annual meeting of the senior management of both QQI and the HEA, one of the agreed actions under the MoU between the two organisations had taken place on 12 May and a number of projects designed to advance the implementation of this MOU had been agreed. Those projects related to the HEA strategic dialogue and QQI annual institutional reporting requirements; the potential of appropriate data sharing and a bilateral research project investigating employer satisfaction in relation to education and training programme and labour market requirements.

The Board noted that the HEA/QQI MoU Implementation Forum will also meet in June to provide oversight and steering for the National Programme for Student Engagement – the QQI/HEA co-funded project run in association with USI.

13.3. <u>Memorandum of Arrangement (MoA) between QQI and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA)</u>

The Board noted the Memorandum of Arrangement between QQI and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency which had been signed on 3 May 2016. The Board noted that QQI where possible seeks to establish MoUs/MoAs with countries/regions where Irish higher education providers operate.

14. **ITEMS FOR NOTING**

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

14.1. <u>Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC)</u>

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Approvals and Reviews Committee* held on 6 April 2016.

14.2. <u>Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)</u>

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the *Programme and Awards Executive Committee* held on 11 and 19 April 2016.

14.3. Programme and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the report on the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Oversight Committee* held on 14 April 2016.

14.4 Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education

The Board noted the background to the development of the National Student Engagement Programme (NSTeP) which has been developed by QQI in association with the HEA and USI. The Board noted that a working group, of which QQI was a member, had been established in 2014 by the HEA to develop guidance for institutions to enhance student engagement in the governance and management of higher education institutions. The resulting set of principles which underpin student engagement and the report making recommendations to higher education institutions and others to assist in improving student engagement, were launched on 14 April. The Board noted, that on the same day, QQI also launched the National Student Engagement Programme which represents a practical approach towards enhancing student engagement, the development of which was informed by the deliberations of the working group. The Board noted that the programme is a collaborative initiative under development by five pilot institutions, their staff and students, USI, the HEA and QQI. The programme aims to develop student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across higher education. The Board noted that from the 12 submissions received for consideration for inclusion in the pilot programme, five institutions were chosen – Cork Institute of Technology, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, NUI Galway, the National College of Ireland and Waterford Institute of Technology.

14.5. QQI Awards Statistics

The Board noted that the QQI website had, in recent months, been updated to include a QQI Infographics facility. It was noted that this facility provides the user with a visual representation of awards data which can easily be filtered on a variety of variables including year, gender, age-band, county, field of learning, awards type and award level. The Board noted that the data was available from 2006 to the current year and includes both further and higher education and training awards (excluding awards where the award making authority has been delegated). The

Board noted the 'QQI Awards – Certification Statistics 2015' report which had been generated in-house using this facility. The Board noted that examination of the awards statistics in this medium can throw up some interesting statistics, demonstrate trends and can show the sometimes reactive nature of programme development following policy changes.

14.6. QHelp Queries

Following consideration of the 2015 Annual Report at its April 2016 meeting, the Board requested a breakdown of the categories of queries received through the QHelp system. The Board noted the high level view of these categories for the period 1 January 2015 to 28 April 2016, approximately 10,000 online queries. The Board noted that the data would assist the Executive in tailoring response articles for the website.

14.7. Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from *15 April to 9 June 2016*).

The Board noted that during April and May, QQI had hosted study visits from delegations from Jordan, Georgia, Croatia, Chile and Russia.

14.8. Rolling Board Agenda 2016

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2016.

15. **NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 30 September 2016** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.