

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Note of the eighth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on
Monday, 18 November 2013 at 10.00 am in the Boardroom, QQI Office, 26/27
Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present:

- Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)**
- Dr. Pdraig Walsh (Chief Executive)**
- Ms. Claire Byrne (Secretary)**
- Ms. Una Buckley**
- Dr. Margaret Cullen**
- Ms. Mary Danagher**
- Ms. Joanne Harmon**
- Mr. James Moore**
- Ms. Cat O'Driscoll**

Apologies:

- Dr. Barbara Brittingham**
- Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan**

In attendance:

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)**
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 13 and 14)**
- Dr. Peter Cullen (Items 8 and 9)**
- Ms. Karena Maguire (Items 8, 9, 10 and 11)**
- Dr. Anna Murphy (Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11)**
- Ms. Trish O'Brien (Items 7, 8, 9 10 and 11)**
- Mr. Ultan Tuite (Item 12)**

Introduction

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Executive for organising the opportunity for Board Members to meet with QQI staff on 6 November last and thanked those Board Members who were free to attend.

The Board noted that the Executive has planned a Workshop for Board Members on Tuesday, 17 December which will focus on Board Performance Evaluation, Risk Management, the upcoming ENQA Review and the QQI Corporate Plan.

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

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 9 September 2013

The Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting held on 9 September 2013 were confirmed and signed.

2. Note of the Meeting of 9 September 2013

The Board noted the Note of the Meeting of 9 September 2013 which was approved for publication on the QQI website.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

The Board noted that the Terms of Reference for the various QQI Committees approved at the September and this Board Meeting would shortly be published on the QQI website.

The Board noted that the Executive would circulate the Board Performance Evaluation Questionnaire for completion by Board Members before year end.

4. Mission, Vision and Values

The Board noted the documents relating to Mission, Vision and Values – Strategy Statement. The Board noted the adjustments made to the Statement on foot of the Board’s suggestions at the September meeting. The Board noted that the Strategy Statement had been sent to the Minister for Education and Skills for his views and the Executive had been informed that the Minister welcomed the Statement and will respond formally shortly. The Board noted that the Executive was continuing to finalise the Strategy Statement for publication and mock-ups were tabled at the meeting. The Board welcomed the QQI Strategy Statement and approved the document for publication. The Executive thanked the Board for its advice and significant input in developing the Statement.

5. Memoranda of Understanding

The Board noted the briefing provided by the Executive on recent developments relating to the various Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on QQI’s agenda. The Board noted that the MoU between QQI and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China was

continuing to progress and that an MoU and Information Sharing Agreement had been signed by the Chief Executives of QQI and QAA (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK) at the recent ENQA General Assembly meeting on 30 October 2013. The Board noted that copies of the MoU and the Information Sharing Agreement had been published on the QQI website. The Board also noted that ground work had begun in relation to developing an MoU between QQI and the HEA. The Board noted that a letter to providers was recently issued jointly by the CEOs of QQI and HEA in relation to the establishment of a National Framework for Doctoral Education. The Board noted the Executive is scheduled to meet with its HEA counterparts within the next few weeks to further discuss areas of responsibility and matters arising from the Hunt Report. The Board noted that it was important to clearly inform institutions of the different areas of responsibility relating to the two agencies.

6. ETBI/SOLAS Update

The Board noted the document tabled at the meeting on the recent developments in relation to the establishment in July, of 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the establishment of SOLAS on 27 October 2013. The Board noted that the Executive was hoping to work towards developing clear lines of communication with the new bodies and had representatives on several of the SOLAS Technical Groups and its Strategic Advisory Group. The Board noted that the Executive would keep the Board updated on any further developments.

7. Committees Structure

The Board noted the document relating to the Establishment of Elements of Committees Structure together with a presentation on the workflows between the proposed Committees and the Board. The Board noted the draft Terms of Reference and indicative membership for the Policies and Standards Committee and the Approvals and Reviews Committees as well as indicative membership proposed for the Programme & Awards Oversight Committee and the Consultative Forum. The Board noted the changes to the Committee titles from those previously advised. The Board noted a number of scenarios presented by the Executive which outlined the flow of work, recommendations and decisions between both the Policies and Standards Committee and the Approvals and Reviews Committee and the Board.

The Board agreed the Terms of Reference as set out and agreed that the Executive should proceed with populating the Committees along the lines described in the supporting documents. The Board noted the schedule for implementation of the Committees.

The Board noted that the Executive's Internal Governance Working Group was continuing to work on the Terms of Reference for the Recourse and Reviews Committee. The Board noted the Executive's intention to shortly invite expressions of interest in order to repopulate and rejuvenate the lists of potential Panel Members for reviews, validations etc. The Board noted and agreed the suggested change to the number of members on the Programme and Awards Oversight Committee from five members to seven. The Board noted the Executive's intention to hold the first meeting of the Consultative Forum towards the end of January 2014.

The Board noted and agreed to the Executive's request for a further opportunity to elaborate on the proposed Recourse and Review Committee Terms of Reference and to explore further the Committee's relationship with the QQI complaints and appeals processes. The Board agreed that the Executive would discuss any further elaborations, if required to the Terms of Reference for this Committee, with the Chairperson ahead of consideration of the matter at the February 2014 Board Meeting.

The Board confirmed the tabled report of the first meeting of the Programme and Awards Executive Committee which was held on 9 October 2013 and which included a list of the items which were approved by the Committee.

8. Comprehensive Policy Development Programme

The Board noted the documents entitled Comprehensive Policy Development Programme. The Board noted the Progress Report on the Policy Development Programme together with a working draft of a diagram plotting the next stage of Policy Development. The Board noted that the Policy and Standards Committee, once established, would handle the early stages of Policy development before forwarding its recommendations to the Board for its consideration. The Board noted that Protection for Enrolled Learners and Fees Implementation Groups had

been established and the first Provider Briefing session, since the opening of the application process for Initial Validation of Programmes, had taken place on 30 October 2013.

The Board noted and formally adopted the Quality Assurance Guidelines for Higher Education and Further Education and Training Providers subject to agreed edits. The Board noted that these guidelines had not been saved as part of the 2012 Act and were required as part of the policy suite and package to guide and support new providers seeking awards.

The Board noted the two Outline White Papers, Policy and Criteria for Aligning Professional Awards with the National Framework of Qualifications at Levels 7, 8 and 9 and Policy and Criteria pertaining to the Delegation of Authority to Make Higher Education and Training Awards (including Joint Awards).

The Board noted that, following consideration of an application for alignment with the NFQ at its meeting on 9 September 2013, the Board requested the Executive to bring forward the development of a QQI Policy on Alignment. The resultant Outline White Paper, developed based on work done by a Working Group appointed by HETAC prior to the amalgamation, involved a twofold approach; firstly consideration of the quality assurance underpinning the provision of the qualification, secondly, the expected learning outcomes of the award. The Board noted the proposed policy was a restricted policy dealing only with the alignment of professional awards at Levels 7, 8 and 9 and the outline criteria will be supplemented with Guidelines.

The Board noted the Outline White Paper on Policy and Criteria pertaining to the Delegation of Authority to Make Higher Education and Training Awards (including Joint Awards). The Board notes that the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 provides explicitly for QQI to make Joint Awards and provides for Joint Awarding by bodies to which QQI has delegated authority. As such, the approach taken in the Outline Paper is to enable joint awards to be made under the 2012 Act within the scope of an Institute of Technology's delegated authority. The Board noted that the Executive had discussed an outline of its proposed policy approach with the Institutes of Technology, Ireland. The Board noted that a Member welcomed the proposed

policy approach as it could facilitate the development of further joint awards between the IoT and university sectors.

The Board approved the two Outline White Papers and requested the Executive to proceed with developing White Papers on these matters. The Board agreed the papers should be published for consultation in December subject to the final versions being approved by the Chairperson on behalf of the Board.

9. Alignment

The Board noted the document relating to an Application for Alignment [of a Professional Qualification at NFQ Level 9]. The Board noted the correspondence issued and received by the Executive on foot of the Board's decision on the application of alignment of a professional qualification with Level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) taken at its meeting on 9 September 2013.

10. Reviews

The Board noted the documentation relating to Reviews. The Board noted the Institutional Review Reports for SQT Training Ltd. and approved the reports for publication by the Executive.

The Board noted the update on the Review of Reviews and noted that the Review Panel had been on site in QQI offices for the previous week for a week long consultation session with a full range of stakeholders. The Board noted that the Executive was anticipating receipt of the completed Review Report early in 2014 and would present it to the Board for its approval thereafter.

11. ENQA Review

The Board noted the documents relating to the ENQA Review together with documentation tabled at the meeting. The Board noted that in order to retain its membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), QQI is required to undergo an external review by ENQA against the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, within two years of its amalgamation. The Board noted that the Executive intends to complete its self-evaluation report by February 2014 with the site visit, which would include a meeting between the Review Team and the Board, scheduled for May 2014. The Board noted that the

matter would be discussed further at the Workshop scheduled for 17 December 2013.

The Board noted that at the General Assembly of ENQA held in Lithuania on 29-30 October, Pdraig Walsh had been elected President of the Association.

12. Audit and Risk

The Board noted the documents relating to Audit and Risk. The Board noted that the Audit Committee had met on two occasions since the September Board Meeting, 3 October and 6 November 2013 and also noted the minutes of the meeting of 3 October and the draft minutes of 6 November which were tabled. The Board noted that among the reports for consideration were some of the first produced by the outsourced internal auditors. The Board noted the Audit Committee's satisfaction with the work completed and the Committee's recommendation to the Executive that it adopt the same RAG rating in the production of audit reports by QQI's Internal Auditor.

The Board noted and approved the review of the System of Internal Financial Controls for 2013 and the Board is satisfied that an effective System of Internal Finance Controls has been put in place.

The Board noted and adopted the revised QQI Purchasing and Procurement Policy and Procedures and the draft QQI Data Protection Policy recommended for adoption by the Audit Committee. The Board noted that the Purchasing and Procurement Policy had originally been adopted by the Board in June 2013 and had now been revised to clarify one of the thresholds and the definition for 'major contracts'.

The Board noted that the Executive was continuing to liaise with the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office with regard to completion of the audit of the FETAC Financial Statements 2011. The Board noted that the Executive was writing to the C&AG regarding closing of the matter, reiterating that as a result of the prolonged process, QQI are unable to register an opening balance on subsequent Financial Statements. The Board noted that should the Executive receive notification of sign off before the next meeting of the Audit Committee

scheduled for 11 March 2014, a further meeting of the Committee may be necessary.

The Board noted the introduction to Risk Management and noted the Executive was providing the Board with an opportunity to feed into the input process at the Workshop scheduled for 17 December.

The Board approved the following Policies and Internal Audit Reports:

- QQI System of Internal Financial Controls
- Revised QQI Purchasing and Procurement Policy and Procedures
- QQI Data Protection Policy
- Data Protection Internal Audit Report
- Revenue Cycle Internal Audit Report and
- Review of System of Internal Financial Controls 2013.

13. Budget and Finance

The Board noted the update on Budget and Finance. The Board noted that the Executive had received confirmation of the State Grant for 2013 from the Department of Education and Skills and noted the reduction in the figure from the initial notification received earlier in the year. This reduction resulted from savings arising from the implementation of the Haddington Road Agreement. The Board noted that confirmation of approval had also been received from the Department in October regarding the collection in 2014 of Relationship Fees from IoTs and from Designated Awarding Bodies.

The Board approved the draft Budget for 2013 amended following receipt of confirmation of the State Grant. The Board noted the budget variance report for the period to 30 September 2013.

The Board noted that, following a tendering process, Crowleys DFK was appointed to provide accountancy services to QQI.

The Board noted the briefing provided by the Executive on the developments regarding the reassignment of the IUQB sub-lease on the Ground Floor of 10 Lower Mount Street to QQI. The Board noted that the assignment of the sub-lease to QQI was approved by the Department of Education and Skills in the

establishment of QQI. The Board noted that on the advice of both QQI's solicitor and accountant, as IUQB would shortly be wound up as a company, the most prudent option was to seek to assign QQI as the sub-lessee. The Board approved the measure as set out at the meeting.

14. Human Resources

The Board noted the update on Human Resources. The Board noted the update on the Change Management and Development Programme. The Board noted that staff had completed an online training needs analysis survey, the results of which would be presented to the Senior Management Team in the coming days.

The Board noted the sick leave metrics for Quarters 2 and 3 of 2013 and noted the reduction on a sliding scale of the number of days taken since the beginning of the year.

The Board noted the changes in sick leave regulations which are due to come into effect from 1 January 2014 and which have been communicated to staff.

The Board noted the update on the current situation regarding QQI's Employment Control Framework.

The Board was briefed on various issues which are currently ongoing and which the Executive hopes to resolve shortly.

15. Enterprise Engagement

The Board noted the document entitled Enterprise Engagement – A Strategic Approach and agreed to defer discussion on the matter until the next Board Meeting scheduled for 14 February 2014.

16. Board Rolling Agenda 2013-2014

The Board noted the update on the QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2013-2014 together with the initial draft QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2014-2015 which was tabled at the meeting. The Board noted the Executive was continuing to refine the schedule for the Comprehensive Policy Development Programme for next year and noted that the QQI Corporate Plan, once finalised, would also feed into the Rolling Agenda for 2014.

17. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the document outlining Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events.

18. Next Meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Friday, 14 February 2014 beginning at 10:00 a.m.

The Board noted the possibility that the Board Meeting scheduled for 11 April 2014 may have to be moved to the following Monday, 14 April but confirmation of same would be issued as soon as possible.

19. Any Other Business

The Board noted the document tabled on Communications to Board Members by External Parties.

The Board noted a briefing on an issue arising with a provider currently undergoing institutional review.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____