Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the thirteenth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 26 September 2014 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
	Dr. Margaret Cullen
	Mr. Kevin Donoghue
	Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan
	Ms. Joanne Harmon
	Mr. James Moore
Apologies:	Ms. Mary Danagher
In attendance:	Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
	Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 5 and 6)
	Mr. Ultan Tuite (Item 4)

INTRODUCTION

The Board agreed to consider the item on Human Resources after Budget and Finance and agreed that otherwise, the Agenda for the meeting was acceptable and adopted same.

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 24 JUNE 2014**

   The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 24 June 2014 were **confirmed and signed**.

2. **NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 24 JUNE 2014**

   The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 24 June 2014* for publication on the QQI website.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

   3.1.   Board Workshops

   The Board noted the low attendance (due to unforeseen circumstances) at the Board
   Workshop held on 12 September. The Board is to consider the matter including the
   suggestion of coinciding future Workshops with scheduled Board Meetings.

   3.2.   Further Education and Training

   The Board noted that the Further Education and Training Strategy would feature on
   the agenda for the December 2014 Board Meeting.

4. AUDIT AND RISK

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

   4.1.   Audit Committee Meeting

   The Board noted the Report of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 12 September
   2014 provided by the Chairperson of the Committee. The Board noted the minutes
   of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2014. The Board noted that the
   Audit Committee would further consider the Internal Audit Report on Protection of
   Enrolled Learners (PEL) at its next meeting scheduled for 21 November and the
   Report is likely to be presented to the Board at its December meeting.

   4.2.   Internal Audit Reports etc.

   The Board noted the recommendations of the Audit Committee in relation to the
   Awards and Certification Cycle Internal Audit Report, the outcome on options for the
   Testing of Risk Register Controls and the revised *Terms of Reference for the Audit
   Committee* which had been considered by the Committee at its meeting of 12
   September 2014.

   The Board noted the risk based approach approved by the Audit Committee in QQI's
   ICT Disaster Recovery Planning and Testing. The Board agreed that there was a
   significant need for succession planning in relation to the area of Awards and
   Certification as well as the development/updating of adequate and comprehensive

documents outlining the area's procedures. The Board noted the Audit Committee's update on the Implementation Status on previous Internal Audit Recommendations and on the current situation with the Aged Debtors Listing and noted the work completed by staff and the Executive to date. The Board noted that the Audit Committee had raised the matter with a representative from the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General who attended the June Committee Meeting and Aged Debtors is now a standing item on the Audit Committee Agenda.

The Board **approved** the *Awards and Certification Cycle Internal Audit Report*, the outcome on options for the *Testing of Risk Register Controls* and the revised *Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee*.

4.3. Purchase Threshold

The Board noted the revised purchase threshold of €207,000 in respect of 'major contracts that require Board approval' in line with the revised EU Journal advertising thresholds effective from 1 January 2014, in accordance with QQI Purchasing and Procurement Policy and Procedures.

5. **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

The Board noted the documents relating to **Budget and Finance** which included the Variance Budget for the period ended 30 June 2014. The Board noted the basis for the current levels of income and expenditure and noted the Executive is developing a process which will enable it to provide evidence to support any potential future cases for additional staffing resources. The Board suggested looking at further options within its communication strategy and budget for the coming months.

The Board noted the details of a tender process for the Contract for Printing of Secure Certificates completed to date and **approved** the awarding of the Contract to the successful tenderer in October 2014 following the conclusion of the competitive tender process by the Executive, in accordance with QQI's Purchasing and Procurement Policy, subject to contract.

6.   UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

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

Items omitted from this note.

6.1.   <u>Independent Professional Assessment</u>

The Board **agreed** that the following items should be standing items on the Board's
Agenda under the Human Resources heading:

- Organisational Development Programme (ODP)

- PMDS

- Sick Leave Metrics (6 monthly)

- Also any matters that invoke HR procedures or have relevance in legislation such
  as the following:

  o   Appointment of Chief Executive

  o   Succession Planning

  o   Employment Control Framework

  o   Matters arising under

     -   Disciplinary process

     -   Grievance procedure

     -   Partnership agreement

- Any matters arising that have the potential to escalate into IR matters will also
  be flagged early to the Board.

The Board **agreed** that a sub-group of Members would meet on an ad hoc basis if
necessary.

6.2.   <u>Labour Relations – Labour Court</u>

The Board noted the comprehensive set of documents relating to the Labour
Relations Commission case. Following on from its discussion at its meeting of 24
June 2014 of the issues raised by SIPTU, the Board noted that the Executive had yet
to be notified of the Commission's decision on the matter.

6.3. PMDS

The Board noted the outline proposal in relation to PMDS. The Board noted that while the Executive had planned to implement PMDS earlier this year; it had been decided that it would be prudent to roll it out with the planning and objectives for 2015 which would allow roles to be clearly linked back to the 2015 Corporate Plan. The CEO would shortly be agreeing 2015 objectives with members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), who in turn would agree 2015 objectives with Unit Managers. The Executive hoped to have this 2 stage process completed by the end of 2014 and thereafter, with the remaining staff in the organisation by the end of January 2015. The Board also noted that the training needs analysis is expected to be completed by the end of January 2015. The Board noted that refresher training on PMDS will be arranged for staff and consideration will be given to sharing all Role Profiles.

The Board noted that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, assessed the performance of the CEO for the period covering the twelve months to June 2014 and outlined the process undertaken. The Board noted that the CEO's contract runs up to 30 September 2015 and the matter of succession planning would be discussed at the Board Meeting scheduled for 5 December.

6.4. Organisational Development Programme (ODP)

The Board welcomed the actions taken to implement the ODP, particularly the introduction of the *Staff Mobility Initiative* and the opportunity it provides staff to move, work and reskill in other areas within the organisation. The Board noted that a number of posts had been advertised internally and the Executive expected to have an update on progress at the next Board meeting.

The Board noted that the Executive was re-establishing the *Staff Forum* with a view to holding the first meeting shortly. Feedback from the Forum is to be presented to the Board for its information.

7. **MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING**

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

7.1. Memorandum of Understanding with the Higher Education Authority

The Board noted that the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between QQI and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) was progressing. The Board noted that discussions had taken place at CEO level and management level. The Board noted that a MoU between the two agencies would be helpful for higher education institutions to see both agencies working in tandem and clarifying the areas of responsibility of each. The Board noted that the Executive anticipates the draft MoU to be presented to both Boards for consideration at their December meetings.

7.2. Management Framework Agreement with the Department of Education and Skills

The Board noted the draft Management Framework Agreement (MFA) between QQI and the Department of Education and Skills. The Board was provided with an insight into the discussions which had taken place between the two bodies. The Board noted the MFA had been developed on the basis of an outcomes metrics which appropriately reflected QQI's corporate planning process. The Board agreed the approach taken and requested the Executive to include a piece on staffing resources within the draft agreement. The Board noted the Executive hoped to conclude the discussions with the Department in the coming weeks.

8. **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The Board noted the document entitled **Governance Structure**.

8.1. Approvals and Reviews Committee

The Board noted the proposed membership of the Approval and Reviews Committee (ARC) and noted that this was the final element of the Governance Structure to be put in place. The Board noted that the ARC would deal largely with the approval of new providers, the authorisation of the IEM and consideration of reviews of higher and further education institutions. The Board **approved** the proposed membership of the ARC and noted that the Executive intended to organise an early induction

session for the Committee. The Board noted that Kevin Donoghue would replace Cat O'Driscoll as a Board nomination to the Committee.

8.2.   Policies and Standards Committee

The Board noted that due to work commitments, Margaret Cullen has had to step down as a member of the Policies and Standards Committee and the Chairperson thanked her for her input to the Committee in its establishment and to date.

8.3.   Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

The Board noted the requirement, under the *Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI Awards*, to establish a Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel to evaluate applications from providers of education and training that apply for initial access to QQI. The Board noted that as part of the agreed application process for those providers seeking access to QQI awards, an evaluation of both the capacity of the applicant to provide high quality education and training and of the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by the applicant, must be completed by a Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel. The Panel would consist of 20 expert members from which QQI would appoint sub-panels to evaluate specific applications. The evaluation of the applications would then, together with a recommendation on the approval of the provider's QA, be forwarded to the Approvals and Reviews Committee for decision. The Board **approved** the proposed structure and selection methodology for the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel.

9.   INITIAL PROGRAMME VALIDATIONS

The Board noted the documents relating to **Initial Programme Validation Approval under HET Council Legacy Policy and Process**.

The Board noted that these were the final 2 applications for initial programme validation which had come through under the HET Council legacy application process.

9.1. Dublin Institute of Design (DID)

The Board noted the Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC), at its meeting on 10 September 2014, approved a Bachelor of Arts award in Graphic Design (NFQ Level 7) and a Bachelor of Arts award in Interior Design (NFQ Level 7) at Dublin Institute of Design, for validation subject to confirmation of Protection of Enrolled Learners arrangements and the operation of a Virtual Learning Environment. Following approval of both the Institutional Evaluation Report (in October 2013) and the initial programme validation, the Board **approved** Dublin Institute of Design as a new provider of programmes leading to QQI Awards under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

9.2. International College for Personal and Professional Development (ICPPD)

The Board noted the Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC), at its meeting on 10 September 2014, approved a Bachelor of Arts award in Holistic Counselling and Psychotherapy (NFQ Level 7) with an exit award, a Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy (NFQ Level 6) at the International College for Personal and Professional Development, for validation subject to confirmation of Protection of Enrolled Learners arrangements and the operation of a Virtual Learning Environment. Following approval of both the Institutional Evaluation Report (in October 2012) and the initial programme validation, the Board **approved** the International College for Personal and Professional Development as a new provider of programmes leading to QQI Awards under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The Board noted that future decisions of this kind will be considered by the Approvals and Reviews Committee.

10. REVIEWS

The Board noted the documents relating to **Reviews**.

The Board noted that in future, reports of Institutional Reviews and Follow-up Reports would be presented to the Approvals and Reviews Committee for its consideration. The Board noted that HEIs were required as part of the review process to submit a 1 year follow up report on any recommendations/conditions arising from the original review.

10.1. Institutional Review of Irish Universities

The Board noted the Follow-up Report of University College Cork would be published on the QQI website.

10.2. Institutional Review Process (of former HET Awards Council)

The Board noted and **adopted** the Follow-up Reports of Carlow College, IBAT College, Setanta College and Clanwilliam Institute, in keeping with the former HET Council's Institutional Review process and noted that these reports would be published on the website. The Board requested the Executive look at developing a template to ensure consistency with regards to the IR Follow-up Reports. The Board noted the new model for QQI Reviews would take that into consideration.

10.3. Annual Institutional Report 2013

The Board noted the Summary Findings of the Annual Institutional Report (AIR) for 2013 which will be published on the QQI website. The Board noted that the AIR is compiled from the findings of reports prepared by each of the Designated Awarding Bodies (DAB) on an annual basis. The Board noted that next year will see the publication of the full reports by each DAB. The Board noted that notes of the annual dialogue meetings between the DABs and the HEA were also published this year. These developments would avoid potential overlaps in information provision by DABs to QQI and the HEA. The Board noted the Executive's intention to roll the AIR process out to the IoTs in 2015 and the ETB sector subsequently.

11. **COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

The Board noted the **Overview of Community and Voluntary Sector Providers.**

The Board noted that the re-engagement process with all existing providers is due to commence in October 2014 and the Executive had been working with representative bodies to communicate with the various sectors of providers. The Board noted that fees and communication continue to be the most significant issues concerning providers, particularly within the community and voluntary sector.

The Board suggested that there is a need for a clear understanding of how the system (both legacy and new) works and a need for more communication as this sector appears not to be as 'networked' when compared with others.

The Board requested the development of a graphical representation of the sector which may assist QQI in communicating its message. The Board also suggested that an event for stakeholders in this sector may be helpful. The Board raised the following areas for further consideration:

- Communication and access to information
- Consistency in the information given
- Funding and finance

The Board felt that there is a need to counteract the misconception that there is going to be a downgrade of this unique sector. The Board noted that QQI is very much constrained by its legislation in relation to this sector and recognises the importance of the sector but the learner has to remain the most important element.

The Board noted that providers, regardless of sector, have to be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to validate and quality assure programmes of education and training and the value of QQI Awards will be devalued if the standards are not maintained.

The Board suggested the Executive explore methods of collaboration between QQI, SOLAS and ETBI to help inform and clarify the sector by adopting a multipronged approach. The Board noted that the Executive had been communicating through many methods but agreed there was a need for additional approaches. The Board noted that the SMT were meeting with the Senior Management Team of SOLAS in the coming days and funding within this sector etc. would be one of the matters raised. The Board noted that the Executive is currently working with the ETBs collectively and individually and the response from that sector has been positive thus far.

The Board noted that there was a consensus on having a common communications strategy and **agreed**, in light of the upcoming discussions with SOLAS and ETBI, that this strategy and

specific actions planned by the Executive should reappear on the December Board Agenda together with the Further Education and Training Strategy.

The Chairperson thanked the Board for the very useful discussion.

12. ENQA REVIEW

The Board noted the update on the **ENQA Review**.

The Board noted the final report of the ENQA Review Panel which assessed QQI's compliance against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The report had been presented to the ENQA Board on 15 September 2014. The Board noted the ENQA Board's decision to reconfirm QQI's Full Membership of ENQA for 5 years with effect from 15 September 2014.

The Board noted the Review requirement to submit a Progress Report in relation to the recommendations contained in the Panel Report within 2 years of the decision i.e. September 2016. The Board noted the recommendations arising from the report, which touched on the following areas:

- development of the remaining policies within the QQI suite;
- development of QQI's own website and
- development of a comprehensive formalised system of internal quality assurance.

QQI was also advised to pay special attention to the following:

- signature of a MoU with the HEA;
- mitigation of the potential conflict of interest between QQI as evaluating body and QQI as awarding body;
- development of system-wide analyses of QQI Quality Assurance procedures;
- cautious development of the International Education Mark;
- extension of the periodic dialogue with HEIs and co-ordination with the HEA;
- strengthen follow-up procedures;
- development of a formalised comprehensive system of data gathering;
- strengthen the training programmes and retrain all experts in the new QQI Policies and Procedures;

- strengthen and diversify the internationalisation of QQI's structure and evaluation procedures.

The Board noted that the Executive had already completed significant work in several of the areas of recommendation and attention. The Board noted the new website was nearing completion and was due for launch on 13 October together with the updated fan diagram and graphic for the National Framework of Qualifications and the QQI Award Brand. Work on drafting an MoU with the HEA is also at an advanced stage. The Board noted that attention has also been given to system wide analysis and a thematic analysis of the Review of Reviews report is due to be presented to the Board at its December meeting. The Board noted the draft *Policy on Authorisation to use the International Education Mark (IEM)* was recently published for consultation and work was also underway on development of a training programme for Expert Panellists.

The Board extended its congratulations to the Executive and staff for the very positive outcome to the review.

13. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

13.1. Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the *Programme and Awards Executive Committee* held on 11 July and 10 September 2014.

13.2. Programme and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the report of the incorporeal meeting of the *Programme and Awards Oversight Committee* held on 25 August 2014 together with an oral report by its Chairperson. The meeting was held following the request of the PAEC to uphold or refer back a decision made by the Committee at its meeting of 11 June to refuse to validate specific programmes. The Board noted that the PAOC upheld and confirmed the decision of the PAEC and the provider was informed of the outcome.

13.3. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Policies and Standards Committee* held on 18 September 2014, together with an oral report by its Chairperson. The Board noted that due to work pressures, Margaret Cullen had to stand down from her role on the PSC and the Chair of the Committee extended its appreciation to her.

The Board noted that the Committee had adopted the awards standards as outlined in the report.

The Board noted following draft white papers were approved for publication for public consultation:

- Draft Code of Practice for Providers of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners
- Draft Policy on Authorisation to Use the International Education Mark (IEM)
- Draft Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Teaching Providers
- Draft Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines
- Draft Policy and Criteria for Making Awards
- Draft Policy and Criteria for Determining Awards Standards
- Draft Overarching Policy on Monitoring

The Board noted that the Committee had confirmed its schedule of meeting dates for 2015.

13.4. Correspondence relating to QQI Nomination to the Apprenticeship Council

The Board noted the correspondence (dated 8 and 21 August 2014) between Ms. Jan O'Sullivan T.D, Minister for Education and Skills and the Executive in relation to the nomination of a QQI representative to the Apprenticeship Council and the Board welcomed the opportunity for QQI's involvement on the Council.

13.5. Correspondence relating to Memorandum of Understanding between Dundalk Institute of Technology and Dublin City University

The Board noted the correspondence (dated 22 August 2014) from Mr. Denis Cummins, President of Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) notifying the Executive

of DKIT's decision to enter into an arrangement with an awarding body other than QQI as outlined in Section 48 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The Board noted that DKIT had entered into an agreement with Dublin City University for a period of 5 years, expiring at the end of the academic year 2018-2019.

13.6. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from 24 June to 26 September 2014).

13.7. Draft Board Agenda (December 2014) and Rolling Board Agenda

The Board noted the current draft Agenda for the next Board Meeting scheduled for 5 December 2014 and the updated QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2014. The Board noted the addition of the Further Education and Training Strategy and the Community and Voluntary Sector to the draft agenda.

14. **TASK FORCE REPORT**

The Board noted the update on the **Task Force on Students Affected by Private College Closures**.

The Board noted that the report of the Task Force on Students Affected by Private College Closures had been published on 2 September 2014 and noted the recommendations which were announced by the Ministers for Education and Skills and for Justice and Equality which included a number of reforms such as replacing the Internationalisation Register with the Interim List of Eligible Programmes for Student Immigration Permission (ILEP) on 1 January 2015. The Board also noted that the Executive needed to be cognisant of the proposed immigration reforms and consider their implications with the Departments of Education and Skills and Justice and Equality, on matters such as the monitoring of compliance with the Code of Practice for providers of programmes of education and training to international learners (linked to authorisation of IEM) and inspection of providers proposed by the Department of Justice and Equality, the possibilities of information exchange between QQI and Justice and Equality, fees associated with the provision of education to international students and the relationships between the revised international education strategy being

proposed by DES in the near future, the immigration reforms and the implementation of the IEM.

The Board noted that a biannual meeting with QAA had taken place on 13 September and the outcomes of the Task Force deliberations was among the items raised at the meeting.

The Board and Executive extended its thanks to the staff members who had worked intensively on this issue over the last number of months.

15. **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

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

The Board noted the third quarter progress report on the 2014 Corporate Plan and noted that activity is largely on track for 2014.

The Board noted that having had to develop the Corporate Plan in isolation in 2014, the Executive had learned from that planning process that it needed to adjust its objective setting to be more specific and measurable. The Board noted that the Executive had begun the next round of discussions for the 2015 planning process with the SMT and Managers and noted the Executive's intended timeline for the process. The Board noted that the Executive had identified areas still to be delivered from the strategic approach and these are to be addressed in the 2015 and 2016 planning process. The Board noted that the draft Corporate Plan 2015 would be presented to the Board at its meeting for 5 December.

The Board noted that the Planning Section had established a system of monthly progress updates with the CEO for 2014-2015. The Board also noted that the SMT would be presented with quarterly progress reports.

The Board noted that the Executive was aligning the planning process with the Management Framework Agreement with the DES and the PMDS process.

16. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 5 December 2014** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17.1. QQI Board Meeting Schedule 2014-2015

The Board noted the **Schedule of QQI Board Meetings 2014-2015**.

The Board confirmed the following schedule of Board Meeting dates for 2015:

- Friday, 13 February 2015
- Friday, 24 April
- Friday, 19 June
- Friday, 25 September
- Friday, 27 November

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____