

POLICIES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (PSC)
Friday 9 December 2016 – 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Denzille Lane, Dublin

Present: James Moore - Board Member and Committee Chair
Ann Louise Gilligan – Board Member
Joanne Harmon – Board Member
Catherine MacEnri – National Expert
Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert
Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert
Lucien Bollaert - International Expert
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Roisin Sweeney – Head of Awards Standards, QQI

Conference Call: Ewart Keep - International Expert

In attendance: Paul Brady - QQI Secretary
Deirdre Stritch, Regulatory Affairs Manager (Items 4.1 and 6.1)
Karena Maguire, Head of Quality Projects, QQI (Item 6.2)

Apologies: Barbara Kelly - Director of Qualifications, QQI

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed the members.

0. Matters Arising

Chairperson report on general activities of interest to PSC.

- 0.1 Revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies came into effect on 1 September 2016, details having been circulated to all appropriate bodies/boards. QQI Board has undertaken review/assessment of the implications of the code. Some work undertaken and indicated to the Board that any changes required would be achieved within a year.
- 0.2 In terms of committees that operate on behalf of the Board, the code introduced the requirement for a record of attendance at meetings, the membership and the staggering of membership of a committee.

0.3 As part of the code a meeting was held for chairs of board/committees in October 2016, at which, the following was discussed.

- operational effectiveness of sub boards / committees of QQI,
- the importance of communication between committees/board was noted
- the provision of support provided for committees from the executive and from the Board,
- Consideration of the role of committees operating as an independent entity from the Board, which can be crucial.
- QQI will proceed with acquiring indemnification for individuals operating on behalf of QQI.

1 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 28th June 2016 (PSC/M10)

The Minutes of the Meetings of 28th June 2016 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

No Business

3. Standards Determinations

3.1 FET Award Standards

Proposed Award Standards – Firefighting Operations

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The members recognised the work involved in the development process, the breadth of expertise in the Standard Development Group (SDG) and that this is the first Firefighting award on the National Framework of Qualification in Ireland. Discussion took place on the methodologies for linking learning outcomes to knowledge, skill and competence. The critical safety factor of this type of award was noted and it was suggested that in future such safety critical standards development activity should include a representative from the HSA. The members NOTED the consultation process and the feedback received from same.

The PSC **AGREED to ADOPT** the new Special Purpose award standards at NFQ Levels 6 for:

Level 6 Special Purpose Firefighting Operations

Proposed Awards Standards – Advanced Cert in Digital Media Production

The members noted the standards presented and considered the observations made. These included the practice of inclusion of an industry representative on the standards development group (SDG). The members noted the original brief of the SDG was for the development of two major awards but due to similarities between the two it was a logical decision to rationalise this into one major award with sufficient breadth of

electives to serve a range of digital media environments such as gaming, animation, web development, mobile applications. It was noted that a capstone module had originally been included in the award standard. It was withdrawn pending further consideration as capstones are a new feature in Further Education and Training and not well known or understood. Further consideration will be given to their use through the awards standards review process. The members NOTED the comprehensive volume and detail of learning outcomes, the consultation process and feedback received from same.

The members **AGREED to ADOPT** the new Major award standard at NFQ Levels 6 for:

Digital Media Production

4. Policy Development

4.1 QQI's policy on internal quality assurance (IQA) of those functions concerned with the external quality assurance of providers

- Explanatory Memorandum
- QQI's policy on internal quality assurance (IQA) of those functions concerned with the external quality assurance of providers

The members noted that the purpose of the internal quality assurance (IQA) policy is to provide a description of the internal quality assurance approach in QQI to those functions concerned with external quality assurance of providers of education and training. The policy serves as the primary reference for the implementation, maintenance, monitoring and review of IQA and can be used for training and audit purposes. The importance of this policy in QQI leading by example should be emphasised/encouraged. The policy will be amended to reflect the discussion of the committee and after approval by CEO will be disseminated internally.

5. Green Papers

No Business

6. White Papers

6.1 Focused Review of Provider QA procedures

- Explanatory Memorandum
- White Paper on Procedures for Focused Reviews by QQI on the Implementation and Effectiveness of Providers QA Procedures (Draft for Consultation)

The members NOTED the draft 'White Paper on Procedures for Focused Reviews by QQI on the Implementation and Effectiveness of Providers QA Procedures' and that a focused review is carried out at

institutional level. This deals with reviews outside of the normal cycle of institutional review and is not a substitution for cyclical review of a provider's QA procedures in accordance with QQI policy. It was noted that QQI is obligated to develop and publish such procedures and that they conform with both the 2012 Act and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Members observed that the procedures set out clearly what is expected from providers during a focused review. Following discussion on aspects of the processes involved, the members AGREED to Approve the draft white paper subject to amendment by the executive taking into consideration the feedback from the committee, including the implications of the outcome/findings of such reviews and the possibility of potential legal action.

6.2 QA Guidelines

- General Update for information
- Background for Information

The members were updated on the range of statutory quality assurance guidelines that have been finalised and published to date. The members also noted that newly designed hard copies are in development, to reflect a clear branding change and to mirror the online suite. An integrated web version, designed to provide easy access to the suite of QA guidelines will be launched in Q2 2017. Electronic copies of all existing guidelines are available at the following [QQI web link](#).

The members were also informed of future guidelines and papers under development, i.e.

- Statutory QAGs for Transnational Collaborative Provision
- QA guidelines on Gender Balance
- QA Guidelines on eLearning

6.2.2 Topic Specific Statutory QA Guidelines for Research Degrees

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Draft 2 White Paper – QAGs Research

The committee noted that the White Paper (draft) on the Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Degrees which was adopted at the June 2016 meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee for consultation was published on the [QQI consultations page](#) and issued to the very broad group of stakeholders who met with the expert group last year as part of the preparation for the QQI research report. The feedback indicated that while the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were very happy with the report produced by the expert group, they were a little disappointed with the first draft of the QA guidelines. They made many suggestions for incorporating new sections. After careful consideration of the feedback received, the QQI executive decided to restructure the white paper and to work with the HEIs to develop a second more detailed 'good practice document' or 'code of practice' that could be used to

supplement a set of high level statutory QA guidelines for research degrees. The supplementary document would be used to:

- replace the IUQB publication on Good Practice in the *Organisation of PhD Programmes in Higher Education, second edition, 2009*
- provide high level statements reflecting provider input on the national expectations for research in general focusing in particular on research creativity and innovation - following on from the high level principles in the National Doctoral Framework
- reference other national work carried out by HEIs on research ethics and other effective practice publications.

A former Dean of Graduate Studies from DCU has agreed to develop this 'good practice' document collaboratively with all HEIs providing research degrees. QQI will publish this collaborative document and formally adopt it as supplementary developmental guidance for HEIs. It will also be referenced as part of the QQI accreditation of those HEIs that require research programme accreditation; the details of which are to be agreed with the programme validation unit. All HEIs have been consulted on this new approach and have indicated they are pleased to proceed along these lines.

Following discussion, the Policies and Standards Committee **Agreed to ADOPT** the revised QA guidelines for a shorter period of further consultation (QA Guidelines for Research) with final publication by the end of January/February 2017.

6.2.3 Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Blended Learning (formerly Flexible Distributed Learning)

- Explanatory Memorandum
 - Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Blended learning (formerly Flexible Distributed Learning) Draft 2
- The members considered the revised QA guidelines for Blended Learning. As a result of the consultation procedure, some issues with the previous title of the guideline i.e. 'Flexible and Distributed Learning' were highlighted, therefore the executive propose to proceed with the publication of these guidelines under a new title "**Blended Learning Guidelines**". The members also noted that the executive intend to develop a broad and comprehensive discussion (green) paper to capture the wider more challenging items raised through the consultation process. This green paper will look at the impact of technology/digital capacity on teaching and learning within the existing or typical education and training context.

Following discussion, the Policies and Standards Committee **AGREED to ADOPT** the revised QA guidelines for Blended Learning for a shorter period of further consultation with final publication by the end of January/February 2017.

7. Any Other Business

7.1.1 Terms of Reference

- Amendment to Terms of Reference of QQI Committees
- Terms of Reference

This paper updates the Policies and Standards Committee on an amendment to its Terms of Reference. The members NOTED the inclusion of the sentence *“Where the Chairperson is not available or not in a position to nominate a Vice-Chairperson, the other members of the Committee who are present may choose one of their number to be Chairperson of that meeting”* in the section Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

7.2 Highlights and Expectations for 2017

Qualifications Directorate

- Research consultation on National Framework of Qualifications
- Standards Development - QQI has published a discussion paper concerning the proposed approach to the review of QQI award standards across further and higher education and training. A series of workshops will take place in January-February 2017. Following discussion with relevant stakeholders, the approach and the review schedule for 2017-19 will be confirmed.
- Standards Development work – Electronics and Music and Dance
- Certification cycles
- Naric/ Foreign Qualifications – Employer awareness

Quality Assurance Directorate

- Further development of QA Guidelines
- Monitoring Policy for review
- Proceeding with re-engagement
- Communications and Branding
- Changes in the UK System

7.3 The PSC AGREED the dates for meetings in 2017 as follows

- Friday 24th February 2017 (Denzille Lane)
- Friday 28th April 2017 (Denzille Lane)
- Thursday 29th June 2017 (venue to be decided)
- 8th or 9th November 2017 (to be clarified)

All meetings will commence at 10:30am and finish at 1:30pm

In closing, the Chairman thanked the members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their contributions and participation in the meeting.