

Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

Notes of meeting of 13 December 2016

Present: Barbara Brittingham (Chair); John Mulcahy; Sarah Ingle; Maureen Conway; Peter Cullen (Key Executive)

Apologies: Mary Danagher; Anne Mangan; Liz Carroll

In attendance: Walter Balfe (QA - QQI)
Antoinette Beatty (QA - QQI)

1. Minutes of PAOC meeting 25th November 2016

The Minutes of the PAOC Incorporal meeting of 25th November 2016 were AGREED.

2. Negative decision taken by the PAEC for confirmation or referral back to the PAEC

2.2 Validation Refusals

The application for validation of a programme (reference PG22301) entitled Introduction to Computer Skills, submitted by Ballyfermot Partnership Local Employment Service, was the only refusal presented to the PAOC for confirmation or referral back to the PAEC.

Application reference: PG22301 - Introduction to Computer Skills, submitted by Ballyfermot Partnership Local Employment Service

Committee member, Maureen Conway, declared a conflict of interest as she is currently on the Board of the applicant provider and therefore, did not take part in deliberations on this agenda item.

The application was refused validation by the PAEC (subject to confirmation by the PAOC) on the basis of the validation report.

- Not enough indicative content. This should be mapped with the Learning Outcomes.
- With reference to Collection of Work and Skills Demonstration, the Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme Guide are insufficient and require more detail.

As per standard procedure, the provider was given an opportunity to respond to the validation report which included a recommendation to QQI to refuse validation. QQI did not receive a specific response from the provider.

A committee member asked whether QQI had proof that the provider received QQI's correspondence.

It was confirmed that the provider had acknowledged receipt of the notification of the recommendation that the programme be refused validation but they did not submit a response to the report within the allotted timeframe. It was also confirmed that QQI gave the provider additional time to submit a response but they still did not reply.

Another area discussed within this agenda item centred around QQI assistance, should the provider choose to re-apply for validation of a modified programme.

It was confirmed that QQI advice would be offered to support them. The provider is to be advised to access support from the FE Support Service and/or CDETB.

QQI observed that while advice can be offered to a provider, it is up to the provider to decide whether or not to heed that advice.

3. Monitoring of Providers and Programmes

Prior to the meeting, it had been explained that the paper on monitoring was a quickly prepared sketch of monitoring-related data held and gathered, it should not be taken as definitive; that the executive would elaborate during the meeting and provide a more comprehensive and precise paper on monitoring in 2017.

This item was introduced by Walter Balfe, Head of Provider Approval.

The document aimed to provide an indication of relevant QQI monitoring activity. It comprised three main headings:

1. Desk Auditing;
2. On-Site Monitoring; and
3. Provider Self-Monitoring

under which, a series of steps and specific points were listed. These included:

- (a) Activity Profiling of validated programmes - this is where exceptions, trends and such like can be identified;
- (b) Information that QQI has on file and can subsequently draw from in preparation for meetings/site-visits and such like - this includes data on validated programmes, current applications, scope of provision, award class, NFQ levels, certification activity over a specific period of time, grading consistency and intakes (previous and planned).

- (c) Data for internal quality assurance of the validation process i.e. stages, duration, exceptions etc.

The document also confirms that for providers in the FET sector, desk monitoring is used to identify exceptions and prioritise risks so that any areas, general or specific, of concern for QQI, can be identified and subsequently addressed. On-site monitoring and Provider self-monitoring are the two main options used by QQI, to address areas of concern.

Where programme review and revalidation is in place, as is the case in higher education and training, that is another source of information about programmes. It was noted that evaluation of feedback from learners, is a requirement for programme review by providers.

Programme reviews leading to re-validation will be introduced in due course in further education with the implementation of the new Validation Policies and Criteria (planned to be implemented for the validation of new programmes of further education and training (other than apprenticeships, where it is already being implemented) by December 2017).

While discussing monitoring, a number of committee members posed questions regarding

- (i) the authenticity of what providers say and report
- (ii) self-evaluation by providers
- (iii) remedies that QQI can suggest/use when desk-monitoring confirms that a provider is not meeting quality assurance expectations
- (iv) the onset of “re-engagement” (a term of art used by QQI to signify the formal re-approval of providers’ QA procedures by QQI)

If a provider is not meeting quality standards or has not put learners forward for certification for a considerable length of time, they are contacted by QQI and asked to explain why this is so. In some cases, the provider agrees voluntarily to withdraw their programmes (leading to withdrawal of validation by QQI on the basis of mutual consent) because their programmes are likely to remain dormant or, they have already ceased offering training programmes to learners.

The onset of re-engagement is at the fore at present, with many providers already preparing for the commencement of the project. This will involve the reviewing of providers’ quality assurance against QQI’s quality assurance guidelines and will be carried out by external panels.

Note: The fact that QQI is lacking resources and so is limited in the ways it can manage the monitoring project, was highlighted.

4. Meeting dates for 2017

The meeting dates proposed for 2017 were agreed by all committee members present. However, if any committee member later realises that they would be unable to attend on any of the meeting dates proposed, they should notify Antoinette via email (abeatty@qqi.ie).

5. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business and so the meeting was deemed ended.