

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the sixteenth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 13 February 2015 at 10.00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present:

- Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)
- Dr. Pdraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Ms. Claire Byrne (Secretary)
- Dr. Barbara Brittingham
- Ms. Una Buckley
- Ms. Mary Danagher
- Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan
- Ms. Joanne Harmon (attend via phone conferencing)
- Mr. James Moore

Apologies: Mr. Kevin Donoghue

In attendance:

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 7 and 8)
- Mr. Vincent Teo (Item 7)
- Mr. Ultan Tuite (Item 6)

INTRODUCTION

The Board agreed the Agenda for the meeting was acceptable and adopted same subject to some changes to the order in which the items were discussed.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF 5 DECEMBER 2014 AND 8 JANUARY 2015

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meetings* held on 5 December 2014 and 8 January 2015 were **confirmed and signed**.

2. NOTES OF THE MEETINGS OF 5 DECEMBER 2014 AND 8 JANUARY 2015

The Board **approved** the *Notes of the Meetings of 5 December 2014* and *8 January 2015* for publication on the QQI website.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1. Further Education and Training (5 December)

The Board noted that the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee had met for a second time. This followed a round of bilateral meetings between SOLAS and each agency charged with a lead role in implementing actions in the strategy. The Board noted that members of the Senior Management Team and Managers had attended the bilateral meeting between SOLAS and QQI where the QQI actions in the FET Strategy and the QQI Response document to the FET Strategy 2014-2019 was also discussed. The Board also noted that a number of the timelines associated with the projects assigned to QQI under the Implementation Plan have now been amended. These projects related to Recognition of Prior Learning, employer engagement around development of award standards/occupational standards and a review of CAS (Common Awards System). The Board noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for the end of April.

3.2. Consultative Forum (5 December)

The Board noted that the Executive was scheduling two meetings of the Consultative Forum in 2015, most likely during the months of April and October and invitations to attend one of the meetings would be issued to Board Members.

3.3. Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) (5 December)

The Board noted that the Executive had engaged a facilitator to assist in its work in the re-engagement with the Community and Voluntary Sector in the short term. The Board noted that a significant amount of work had taken place in relation to establishing a QQI/Community and Voluntary Sector Working Group. Terms of Reference for the Group have been drafted and invitations to nominate representatives to the Working Group have been issued to bodies such as AONTAS, An Cosán, ICTU, Pavee Point, Community Education Networks as well as bodies in

disability and drug rehabilitation sectors. The Executive expects the first meeting of the Working Group to take place in early March where the draft Terms of Reference will be discussed. A verbal update on the meeting and developments will be provided to the Board at its meeting scheduled for 24 April. The Executive undertook to forward the draft Terms of Reference to Board Members for their information.

3.4. Succession Planning (8 January)

The Board noted that the document agreed, with minor modifications, at the restricted session of the Board at its meeting on 8 January 2015 had since been forwarded to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and an acknowledgement had been received. The Board noted that the Chairperson would follow up on the matter with the Department.

3.5. Board Member Vacancy (8 January)

The Board noted that Margaret Cullen's resignation as a member of the Board had been received with effect from 23 January 2015. The Board noted the Executive's outline of the process for advertising Board vacancies through the State Board portal operated by the Public Appointments Service and engagement with a liaison officer in the Corporate Affairs Section of the DES. The Board noted that the Chairperson and the Executive would ensure the matter is dealt with expeditiously.

4. BOARD MEETING AGENDAS

The Board noted additional opportunities to include items in Board Meeting Agendas had been highlighted during the Board Performance Evaluation process. The Chairperson invited the Board to discuss and add items to future Board Meeting Agendas. The Board noted the current draft Agenda for the Board Meeting scheduled for 24 April 2015 and the updated QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2015 that originally appeared under item 15, Items for Noting. During the course of the discussion, the following items were mentioned for inclusion:

- More external presentations to the Board (the Board noted that the CEO of HEA would present at the November Board Meeting as part of the conditions of the MoU agreed between the two agencies).

- A critical review of QQI's communications strategy and an examination of how to develop the profile of QQI.
The Executive agreed with this suggestion and the Board noted that the first run of QQI certificates was due at the end of the month and the Executive believes that this will have a significant impact on the recognition of the QQI 'brand' and agreed that QQI's communication strategy would appear as an agenda item at its meeting scheduled for 24 April.
- Examine feedback from stakeholders, perhaps twice a year or as necessary; allow/provide the opportunity for them (stakeholders) to evaluate the service they are getting over and above the feedback received through the QQI Consultative Forum.
- Following on from the meeting with the ENQA Review Panel in 2014, the Board suggested increased critical analysis as a Board may be beneficial.
- Notification of QQI mentions in the media (for information).

5. BOARD PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The Board noted the documents related to the **Board Performance and Evaluation**.

The Board noted the synopsis of the Members' combined responses to the Board Performance Survey. The Board decided to incorporate the Board Performance Evaluation into a proposed workshop on Strategy which will give members an opportunity to consider how to address the key issues and brainstorm the items raised in the course of the evaluation.

6. AUDIT AND RISK

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

The Board noted that the November 2014 meeting of the Audit Committee had been postponed until 23 January 2015 and as a result, there was a large amount of documents and material to consider.

The Board noted that the Audit Committee meeting held on Friday, 23 January 2015 had been the final meeting for the Chair of the Committee, Dr. Margaret Cullen, prior to her

resignation from the Committee (and Board). The Board noted that Jim Moore had taken on the role of Chairperson of the Audit Committee in the short term.

6.1. Internal Audit Reports

The Board discussed and **approved** the following Internal Audit Reports as recommended by the Audit Committee:

- Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL)
- Qualifications and Recognition Cycle
- Procurement Cycle Audit
- Annual Report 2014 of the Audit Committee

The Board noted the Audit Committee's suggestion of conducting an internal audit of QQI's Communications Strategy but the Board considered it was too early in QQI's establishment for a proper assessment including implementation and suggested deferring the audit until late 2015/early 2016.

6.2. System of Internal Financial Controls (SIFC)

The Board noted and **approved** the review of the System of Internal Financial Controls for 2014 and the Board is **satisfied** that an effective System of Internal Financial Controls has been put in place.

6.3. Risk Register – January 2015 and Testing of Risk Register Controls

The Board noted the Risk Register, which had been revised following updates, and the outline of proposed testing of controls around high and medium level risks. The Board discussed the Register at length and noted that while it is not a static document, some areas may need to be updated to reflect the appropriate level of risk resulting from key developments which had occurred within recent weeks. The Board noted that it can highlight areas it wishes the Executive to re-evaluate and noted the Risk Register is considered and discussed by the Audit Committee regularly. The Board **approved** the Risk Register subject to the ongoing review by the Executive taking into account the comments and suggestions made at the meeting.

6.4. Items for Noting

The Board noted the following items arising from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23 January 2015:

- The clearance of the QQI Financial Statements for 2013 by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG),
- The C&AG Audit Report and Management Letter and QQI response relating to the FETAC Financial Statements 2011 and 2012
- The in-house desk review of the outsourced Internal Audit in respect of ICT Controls and Security at the request of the Audit Committee (April 2014) and,
- The Schedule of Audit Committee Meetings 2015.

QQI Financial Statements 2013

The Board noted that the QQI Financial Statements for 2013 had been cleared by the Comptroller and Auditor General and copies were available for their information.

FETAC Financial Statements 2011 and 2012

The Board noted the Management Letter dated 15 January 2015, received from the C&AG's Office, in relation to the FETAC Financial Statements for 2011 and 2012 and which included references to lease exit costs and pension issues, items which had previously been brought to the Board's attention. The Board noted that this concluded the Financial Statements for all the legacy agencies.

ICT Review

The Board noted that the Internal Auditor had completed a desk review of the outsourced Internal Audit Report in respect of ICT Controls and Security at the request of the Audit Committee. The Board noted that, with one small exception due to be completed shortly, all recommendations were closed.

7. **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

Caitriona Lawless, Padraig Walsh, Claire Byrne and Eamonn Collins left the meeting for part of this item.

The Board noted the update on **Budget and Finance** which included the provisional Variance Budget for the period ended 31 December 2014.

The Board noted that provision had been made for substantial legal fees arising from the recent High Court case relating to Regulations for proposed Immigration Reforms. The Board also noted that there had been an increase in income partly due to significant progress made in the area of aged debtors. The Board noted that the Executive was working on finalising the accounts for 2014 and the final figures should be available in the coming weeks.

7.1. State Grant

The Board noted the revised 2015 Estimates Volumes include QQI's State Grant in the amount of €5.794m which has also been confirmed by the Department of Education and Skills. The State Grant for 2014 was €7.225m resulting in a difference of €1.431m. The Board noted that the Audit Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2015, expressed concern at the lack of alignment and the dis-connect between the State Grant and the Strategic Goals of QQI and that it is likely to make the achievement of QQI's goals and objectives extremely challenging. The Board noted the Committee's request that the Board consider making an approach to the Department in the near future.

The Board discussed the matter at length and noted that while the impact of the cut may not be felt immediately; it was considered that there would be significant impact in future years once all QQI's operations are up and running. The Board welcomed the opportunity to have the discussion and noted that while it is difficult to fully predict what areas of work will be affected at the moment, it should be possible to do so in the future.

The Board **agreed** that the Executive should submit in September 2015, a draft Budget for 2016 together with a multiannual budget for 2016, 2017 and 2018 to the Department and open discussions on the matter. The Board also **agreed** that the Chairperson should write to the DES on its behalf, expressing its concern regarding the process; establish a dialogue and working with them through submission of a draft budget in September 2015.

7.2. Aged Debtors

The Board noted the comparative report on Aged Debtors during 2013 and 2014 and welcomed the progress made by the Finance Team to date. The Board noted that the Audit Committee had requested that a summary narrative commentary on the key data and trends in the aged debtors listing be presented to the Committee at future meetings.

7.3. Meeting with QQI Accountant

The Board met with QQI's Accountant Mr. Vincent Teo, without the Executive present, to assure itself of the Executive's performance in relation to financial matters. The Board noted his update on the areas of Aged Debtors, the matching of EU Funding and the soon to be implemented devolved budgeting.

8. **UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

Caitriona Lawless left the meeting for this item.

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

Item omitted from this note.

9. **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Board noted the documents entitled **Strategic Development**.

The Board noted the update on the Strategy Statement. The Board noted that legislatively QQI is required to produce its second Strategy Statement and all subsequent statements every three years from the date of establishment (November 2012) and submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills at least three months prior to the anniversary date. The Board noted the outline timeline for the development of the second statement. The Board noted that a staff survey to gauge effectiveness of the original statement and meetings with the SMT had already taken place.

The Board **agreed** the date of **Friday, 27 March at 1:30 p.m.** for the Board to discuss and provide guidance in relation to the draft statement. The Board would contribute to the draft prior to its publication for public consultation and the final draft would be presented to the Board for approval at its June Board Meeting.

10. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

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

The Board **approved** the proposed amendments to the *Terms of Reference of the Programme and Awards Oversight Committee*. The Board also approved the additional amendment suggested by the Executive, the deletion of the following text from the Terms of Reference: '*ACELS recognition and recognition within the NFQ*' (from the second bullet point under the section entitled Purpose). The Board **approved** the revised Terms of Reference.

11. MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

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

11.1. Memorandum of Understanding with the Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The Board noted that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between QQI and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) had been signed by both parties and would be launched by the Minister for Education and Skills. The Board noted that the Executive was awaiting confirmation on the launch date from the Department of Education and Skills.

11.2. Management Framework Agreement (MFA)

The Board noted that the Executive was still awaiting agreement of the MFA with the Department of Education and Skills and had been in touch with Departmental officials in an attempt to progress the matter. The Board noted that the Chairperson intended to discuss the progress with the Secretary General at an early opportunity.

11.3. Central Statistics Office (CSO)

The Board noted the draft MoU between QQI and the CSO and noted that QQI would continue to share information in line with its Data Protection obligations.

12. UPDATE ON IEM/ACELS

The Board noted the update, provided by the Executive, on the outcome of the High Court case, relating to the reforms arising from the deliberations of the Task Force on Students

Affected by Private College Closures announced by the Ministers for Justice and Equality and Education and Skills in September 2014. The Board noted that following the judgement, QQI cannot operate ACELS on a statutory basis but can continue to maintain it on a contractual basis.

The Board noted that arising from the judgement, a number of questions had been raised with regard to some of the operations in QQI's plans and their standing under the 2012 Act. Following legal advice, the matter has been raised with the Department of Education and Skills. The Board noted the options for resolution as outlined by the DES and the estimated timeframes involved. The Board noted that these developments may now further delay the introduction of the IEM. The Board requested the Executive to summarise the process for the Board and forward it to them for their information. The Executive agreed to forward the note as soon as the situation has been further clarified.

13. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Board noted the update on the **Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**.

The Board noted the Comprehensive Policy Development Programme Progress Report for 2014, which examined the policy areas developed and issued for public consultation during 2014 and outlined the areas for attention during 2015. The Board welcomed the document and thanked all staff for their work in the policy area over the past year.

14. REVIEWS

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

The Board noted the one year Follow-up Report of the Institutional Review of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) which would be published on the QQI website shortly. The Board noted that the Review and Enhancement Manager would follow up with RCSI.

15. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

15.1. Programme and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Oversight Committee* held on 4 December 2014.

The Board also noted the Annual Report of the Committee for 2014.

15.2. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Policies and Standards Committee* held on 10 December 2014. The Board noted the Committee had reviewed five craft awards and approved the introduction of award type descriptors around the specified crafts.

The Board noted that the Apprenticeship Council had been established on an interim basis and on which there was a QQI representative.

15.3. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from 6 December 2014 to 13 February 2015).

The Board also noted that the Executive has completed the cycle of Initial Dialogue Meetings with the 13 Institutes of Technology during the period 4 November 2014 to 11 February 2015. The Board noted that the exercise had proved to be very interesting and had been appreciated by the sector. The Board welcomed the development as an opportunity to receive feedback and see how QQI had been received since its establishment.

15.4. Draft Board Agenda (April 2015) and Rolling Board Agenda 2015

See item 4 above.

16. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 24 April 2015** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____