

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the fourteenth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 5 December 2014 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
- Dr. Margaret Cullen
- Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan
- Ms. Joanne Harmon
- Mr. James Moore

Apologies:

- Ms. Mary Danagher
- Mr. Kevin Donoghue

In attendance:

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 4 and 5)

INTRODUCTION

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

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 26 SEPTEMBER 2014

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 26 September 2014 were **confirmed and signed**.

2. NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 26 SEPTEMBER 2014

The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 26 September 2014* for publication on the QQI website.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1. Management Framework Agreement

The Board noted that the Executive had hoped to have the signed Management Framework Agreement in place with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in advance of the December Board Meeting. The Board noted that Department officials had circulated the draft document wider within the Department for further views in advance of sign off. The Board noted that the Executive intends to work towards the dates set out within the agreement and expects that it will be in place by the first review meeting between the Executive and DES officials early in January 2015.

4. BUDGET AND FINANCE

The Board noted the documents entitled **Budget and Finance** which included the Variance Budget for the period ended 31 October 2014.

The Board noted the basis for the current levels of income and expenditure and that a number of large expenditure charges are likely to be invoiced in December including a significant legal bill (see item 7).

The Board noted the details of the tender process for a Framework Agreement for ICT services, following which 16 companies were appointed to a Framework of Suppliers Panel from which QQI can draw resources. The Board noted that the Executive intended to conduct a mini tender of the 16 companies during December to procure the resources required to provide QQI's ICT services during 2015.

The Board **approved** the expenditure for *ICT Contract Resources* for the first six months of 2015, in accordance with public procurement rules and QQI's Purchasing and Procurement Policy.

The Board noted that the budgeted amount for ICT expenditure in 2015 was lower than previous years and noted that QQI's ICT budget proposals had been submitted in October to the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD) for approval.

The Board noted that the line items in the October Departmental budget had yet to be published but are expected within the next few weeks and the Executive expected the State Grant for 2015 to be in the region of that of previous years.

5. UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

Caitriona Lawless, Padraig Walsh, Claire Byrne and Eamonn Collins left the meeting for all or various stages of this item.

The Board noted the documents entitled **Update on Human Resources** and **Update on Human Resources as at 4 December 2014**.

5.1. IR Issues

The Board noted developments in relation to claims made by SIPTU in relation to grading/reporting structure and parity with the education sector. The Board noted the Labour Court recommendations issued on 16 October 2014 and the ongoing engagement on the matter between the Executive and SIPTU and the Executive and the Department of Education and Skills.

The Board agreed that it has a very legitimate interest in the organisation structure and its impact on QQI's effectiveness. The Board **agreed** that the Executive should continue to work towards an appropriate organisation structure in consultation with the Department and any proposed modifications should be reported to the Board.

5.2. Item omitted from this note.

5.3. Implementation of PMDS

The Board noted that the PMDS process had commenced and the CEO is meeting with senior managers during December and January to agree performance goals and objectives. Following this, the senior management team will initiate the same process with managers and managers in turn will meet with staff to finalise phase one. The

Board noted that training courses were being provided to Managers in December and staff training will commence early in January 2015.

5.4. Organisational Development Programme

The Board noted the advancements in the *Staff Mobility Initiative* since its establishment in August 2014. The Board noted that three appointments had been made under the initiative and two more were in the pipeline.

The Board noted that initiatives to support employee health and wellbeing continue in the context of organisational development.

5.5. Succession Planning (Restricted Session)

The Chief Executive, the Secretary and Board Executive left the meeting.

The Chairperson set out his proposal in relation to Succession Planning for 2015. The Board **endorsed** the Chairperson's approach and **agreed** to consider the matter again at the Board meeting on 8 January 2015.

6. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Board noted the documentation relating to the **Governance Structure**.

The Board **approved** the proposed amendment (inclusion of a specific reference to the Committee's role in determining award-type descriptors) in the ***Terms of Reference of the Policies and Standards Committee***. The amended Terms of Reference will now include the sentence: *'The Policies and Standards Committee will make determinations regarding NFQ award-type descriptors to the Executive'*.

The Board noted feedback from Board Members who are members of Committees. The Board expressed a need for streamlining of committee business to focus on the remit of the Committees and to avoid over engagement in matters of corporate governance.

7. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Board noted the documents relating to the **Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**.

7.1. International Education Mark (IEM)

The Board noted that the consultation process on the White Papers for the IEM Policy Package closed on 14 November 2014 and the Executive was reviewing the feedback received. The Executive deferred presenting the IEM Policy Package to the Board for decision until the next meeting of the Board, an ad hoc meeting scheduled for 8 January 2015.

The Board **approved** the approach as proposed by the Executive and noted that the full suite of IEM Policy documents would be presented to the Board for decision at its January 2015 Meeting. The Board noted that the IEM application process, once approved, would be rolled out to the Higher Education and English Language Teaching sectors initially.

The Board noted that the Executive had made a submission to the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the suite of fees around re-engagement and the IEM and was awaiting feedback from the Departments. The Board noted that the Executive hoped to have a response in advance of the January 2015 Board Meeting.

The Board noted that QQI had been cited as a named respondent in an upcoming 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 Education and Skills in September. The Board noted the Executive's hope that the case would be heard in advance of the year's end.

7.2. QQI Policies

The Board noted and **adopted** the following policies and criteria:

- Policy on Monitoring
- Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines
- Policy and Criteria for Making Awards
- Policy for Determining Awards Standards

The Board noted that the policy documents listed above had been through the public consultation process which closed on 14 November 2014.

7.3. Revision of Quality Assurance Guidelines (for Initial Access)

The Board noted the Executive's proposal regarding revisions to the Quality Assurance Guidelines. The Board noted that these guidelines were published as part of the application process for those seeking access to the initial validation process. The Board noted that the Executive intended to update the QA Guidelines to take account of the publication of the new QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines, the QQI Policy for Re-engagement with legacy providers, the recent revisions to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area as well as other developments. The Board **approved** the Executive's approach to adapt and re-issue the QA Guidelines for Initial Access to apply to all voluntary providers of programmes leading to QQI awards (to allow their use in the re-engagement process).

8. MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

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

8.1. Memorandum of Understanding with the Higher Education Authority

The Board noted that the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between QQI and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) had been considered and discussed at the meeting of the HEA Board held on 1 December 2014, where it was approved subject to the inclusion of amendments suggested by the Authority.

The Board noted the draft MoU together with the suggested amendments from the HEA.

The Board noted that among the conditions of the MoU were the invitation of the CEO of each organisation to meet with the Board of the other on an annual basis and annual meetings between the full Senior Management Teams of each organisation. The Board noted that the MoU would run until 30 November 2017 and would be reviewed on an annual basis.

8.2. Memorandum of Understanding with the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications

The Board noted that a Memorandum of Understanding between QQI and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) had been signed on 30 October 2014.

9. FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Board noted the documents entitled **Further Education and Training**.

9.1. SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 - 2019

The Board noted the draft QQI Response to the recently published SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 - 2019. The Board noted that a Further Education and Training Strategy (FET) Implementation Advisory Committee had been established and its first meeting had taken place at the end of October 2014. The Board noted that the Chief Executive was the QQI representative on the Committee which would meet every three months. The Board warmly welcomed the QQI Response document and **approved** it for publication.

The Board noted that the Executive intended to send the QQI response document to both SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills prior to publication. The Board suggested the response document was an opportunity to suggest new approaches where QQI had been named lead party on items in the FET Strategy Implementation Plan.

The Board noted that once SOLAS had appropriate time to establish itself, QQI plans to develop a MoU with the agency. The Board noted that in the meantime the two agencies were continuing to meet on a regular basis.

The Board noted that following the establishment of QQI, SOLAS and the ETBs, corporate responsibility for the quality assurance of the majority of FET centres now lies with the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The Board noted that a QQI staff member was in the process of completing a series of meetings with each of the ETBs.

The Board noted that some ETBs had established themselves quicker than others following the various mergers involved.

The Board noted also that the Executive had taken the opportunity to invite the Limerick/Clare ETB to make a presentation to staff at management level on 6 November at which they outlined progress and developments from their particular view point.

The Board noted that the rationalisation of the ETB sector would allow QQI to have a unique one to one relationship with each individual ETB and the Executive would continue to work with the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) on a sectorial basis. The Board noted that the Executive has a clearly thought out strategy for dealing with this sector.

9.2. Community and Voluntary Sector

The Board noted and discussed the proposed approach for engagement with the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS). The Board noted the Executive had arranged another presentation similar to the one with Limerick/Clare ETB, mentioned above, with an interagency Quality Assurance Network that was established as part of a Leargas project and features groups and agencies based in the Ballymun area. These presentations assist QQI staff with getting a sense of the impact of work and developments in the sector. A Board Member indicated interest in attending the presentation with the interagency QA Network. An invitation was extended to the Board Member.

The Executive is considering options in relation to better communicating with the sector, including commissioning an external advisor, with experience and awareness at local and national level in the CVS sector, to assist in the development of QQI's plan and methodology for collaboration and communication with the sector – this advisor would be engaged through a procurement exercise.

The Board **agreed** with a Board Member's suggestion that the Executive consider a linguistic analysis in relation to each sector QQI works with. The Board looked forward to hearing more about developments in this area as they arise.

10. REVIEWS

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

10.1. Higher Education Themes from Review Findings

The Board noted that following the publication of the Review of Reviews Report in May 2014 and on foot of one of the recommendations arising from that review, the Executive commissioned a more detailed analysis of the findings of the legacy reviews. The detailed analysis is entitled 'Higher Education Themes from Review Findings' and is now published.

The Board noted that the Executive had hosted a Reviews Policy Seminar on 4 December which included presentations by Dr. Helka Kekäläinen (The Finnish Model and Experience), Dr. Barbara Brittingham (The US Model and Experience) and Dr. Sijbolt Noorda (A European Perspective). The Board noted that the seminar had proved to be a very engaging and well attended event and noted that the various presentations 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 Report of SQT Training Ltd., in keeping with the former HET Council's Institutional Review process and noted that this report would be published on the website.

11. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

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

11.1. Corporate Plan 2015

The Board noted the draft Corporate Plan 2015. The Board noted that the Executive had consulted with all staff during the compilation of the draft plan and noted that

the plan contains high level objectives rather than operational objectives which are captured separately in the operational plan database. The Board **approved** the QQI Corporate Plan 2015 subject to the inclusion of suggested amendments and noted the Executive's intention to publish the Corporate Plan by 1 January 2015. The Board noted that the plan was comprehensive and linked to Staff Role Profiles.

The Board noted that the outcome of recommendations arising from the ENQA Review would be captured in the 2014 Annual Report.

11.2. Progress Report on Corporate Plan 2014

The Board noted the progress report on the 2014 Corporate Plan and noted that the draft annual report for 2014 would be presented to the Board at its meeting scheduled for April 2015.

12. BOARD PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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

12.1. Progress Report 2012/2013 Evaluation

The Board noted the progress report on the outcomes of the 2012/2013 Board Performance Evaluation. The Board noted that the last review had proved to be a very useful exercise with several helpful outcomes which added greatly to the functioning of Board Meetings.

12.2. Board Performance Evaluation 2014

The Board noted that the form for the 2014 Review had been amended to include some of the matters raised in the course of last year's review. The Board **approved** the Questionnaire for the 2014 Board Performance Evaluation.

The Board noted that the Executive would circulate the form for completion by Board Members in the next few weeks and the report on the outcomes would feature as an agenda item at the Board Meeting scheduled for 13 February 2015.

13. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

13.1. Consultative Forum

The Board noted the report of the *Consultative Forum* meeting held on 7 October 2014. The Board noted that the meeting included presentations on 'FET Strategy' by Bryan Fields, Director of Strategy and Research at SOLAS and on 'HE Engagement Strategy' presented by Dr. Mary-Liz Trant, Head of Skills and Enterprise Engagement at the HEA. The Board noted that the Executive had received very positive feedback from participants to date and noted informal feedback from a number where participation had allowed them to gain a better understanding of the range of providers QQI deals with and provided a facility to network. The Board noted that the Forum is expected to continue to meet twice a year.

13.2. Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC)

The Board noted the report of the first meeting of the *Approvals and Reviews Committee* held on 3 November 2014. The Board noted that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 27 April 2015.

13.3. Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Executive Committee* held on 19 November 2014. The Board noted that the PAEC was no longer only referring complex negative decisions to the PAOC for confirmation but were now referring all negative decisions for review/confirmation.

13.4. Programme and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the oral report of the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Oversight Committee* held on 4 December 2014. The Board noted that the Terms of Reference of the Committee would be amended to allow the Committee review negative decisions relating to IEM applications once that process is up and running. The Board noted that the PAOC would continue to meet twice a year and any additional business would be handled via phone conferences. The Chairperson

thanked the Chair of the PAOC, Barbara Brittingham for all her assistance in the past week.

13.5. 'Education and Skills: Working Together to bring Opportunities across Europe home to You'

The Board noted the guide on EU initiatives in Education and Skills produced by the Irish Reference Group for EU Initiatives in Education and Skills with the support of Erasmus+ (in association with QQI)

13.6. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from 30 September to 5 December 2014).

13.7. Draft Board Agendas (January and February 2015) and Rolling Board Agenda

The Board noted the current draft Agendas for the Board Meetings scheduled for 8 January and 13 February 2015 and the updated QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2014 and 2015.

14. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Thursday, 8 January 2015** beginning at **16:00 p.m.**

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1. ENQA

The Board noted that Pdraig Walsh had been re-elected to the Board and as President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The Board noted that QQI would host the ENQA General Assembly in Dublin in October 2015 at which representatives of some 40 countries will be in attendance.

15.2. Audit Committee

The Board noted that the Audit Committee meeting scheduled for 21 November 2014 had been postponed until early 2015 and an update on Committee matters would be presented to the Board at its February 2015 meeting.

15.3. QQI Board Meeting Schedule 2014-2015

The Board noted the date of 19 June 2015 was no longer suitable for the June Board Meeting and the meeting would now take place on Friday, 12 June.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____