

POLICIES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (PSC)
Tuesday 28 June, 2016 - 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

Present: James Moore - Board Member and Committee Chair
Ann Louise Gilligan – Board Member
Catherine MacEnri – National Expert
Lucien Bollaert - International Expert
Ewart Keep - International Expert
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Barbara Kelly - Director of Qualifications, QQI
Roisin Sweeney – Head of Awards Standards, QQI

In attendance: Paul Brady - QQI Secretary
Peter Cullen, Head of Validation and Delegation (Item 6.1)
Karena Maguire, Head of Quality Projects, QQI (Item 6.2)

Apologies: Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert
Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert
Joanne Harmon – Board Member

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed the members.

0. Matters Arising

0.1.1 Meeting scheduled for 13th May 2016. The Chair noted the cancellation of the May meeting, however as there was a low volume of material ready for presentation to the committee it was not deemed an appropriate use of members' time to call the meeting.

0.1.2 QQI submission on Department of Education and skills consultation paper Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2018.

Since the last meeting of the PSC a new government has been formed and a new Minister (Richard Bruton T.D.) has been appointed to the Department of Education and Skills. The Minister made a call for submissions on a consultation paper on a new Statement of Strategy for the Department. The members were issued with a copy of QQI's submission (a draft of which was circulated to the QQI Board before submission) for information purposes and were also informed of the major points for

consideration in the document. It was noted that it is important that the members are updated and made aware of such activities in which QQI is engaged.

0.1.3 Brexit – Department of Education and Skills communication

It was noted that Department of Education and Skills had circulated key messages related to the recent referendum on UK membership of the European Union. The high level issues noted by the Department were advised to the Committee.

1 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 29th February 2016 (PSC/M10)

The Minutes of the Meetings of 29th February 2016 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

No Business

3. Standards Determinations

3.1 FET Award Standards

Proposed Awards Standards – Guiding

The members noted the standards presented and considered the observations made. These included the logical structure of the standards and the rationalisation of the number of awards to more closely suit the requirements of the sector and support the implementation of the recent Tourism Action Plan for the period 2016 – 2018. The members NOTED the comprehensive volume and detail of learning outcomes, the scope for innovation and for different learning styles to be accommodated, the consultation process and feedback received from same.

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

National Tour Guiding

Regional Tour Guiding

Angling Tour Guiding

Coastal Tour Guiding

Proposed Award Standards – Agriculture

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The members recognised the large body of work involved in the review process. Discussion took place on the changed nature of provision in the sector, ranging from Teagasc as a sectoral body and now other providers' involvement in response to industry demand. The members noted the scope of the review took cognisance of the sectoral report 'Harvest 2020', the scope of activity from operative to management and that the

standards would be adaptable to future changes in the sector. The importance of the inclusion of a capstone module in the Level 6 Major award as a means of integrating learning was also noted. The members NOTED the consultation process, the inclusion of a consultation workshop, and the feedback received from same.

The PSC agreed to ADOPT the revised and new award standards at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 for:

Level 5 Major Certificate Agriculture

Major Certificate Agriculture

Specific Purpose Certificate Farming

3.2 QQI Review of Award Standards

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Review of QQI Award Standards: Approach and Schedule

The members NOTED the paper presented as the proposed approach to the review of standards in line with QQI's Strategic Statement and the Corporate Plan 2016. The members considered the observations made particularly in relation to the methodology, sequencing and impact the review will have on providers. The role of community/voluntary provision within both FET and HET was noted. Key elements in implementing the approach to review will be its resourcing and timing to ensure activity is realistic and achievable. The members noted that the executive intend to consult with a range of stakeholders on the proposed review strategy up to end of September 2016. A review schedule will then be formally published and review groups set up.

3.3 Qualifications

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Qualifications - Next Steps

The members NOTED the paper presented as QQI's strategic approach to the development, awarding and recognition of qualifications. The paper outlined QQI's plans in terms of evolving and enhancing the qualifications system. It recognises the current national qualifications focus of the NFQ and how legislative change is required to open the framework to other qualifications. The planned research is acknowledged, as is the influence of new structures being set up such as the National Skills Council., Regional Skills Fora and the European Skills Agenda.

The members considered the observations made during the course of discussion and NOTED the ambitious nature of the work plan. The members discussed the need for both national and international research alongside the proposed work plan. Discussion took place on issues such as the realistic expectations of a qualification, what happens to learners after achieving qualification, greater employer engagement in relation to needs and qualification requirements and the importance of recognition of prior learning. The executive advised that a paper will be prepared for the committee in relation to progress of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) activity.

4. Policy Development

No Business

5. Green Papers

No Business

6. White Papers

6.1 White paper Delegation of Authority

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Procedures and criteria relating to delegation of authority

The members NOTED the draft procedures and criteria for the determination of a request for delegated authority (DA) to make an award in respect of a programme or class of programmes presented and the draft procedures for the review of each programme or class of programme of education and training of a provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated. The range of providers who may apply for DA are identified in the 2012 Act and it was noted that in future the Minister may set up regulations that will allow extension of DA to private providers. Members observed that the procedures and criteria are detailed and robust. Particular attention will be given to ensuring provider maturation and their organisation development together with an emphasis on 'earned trust' as part of the delegation of authority process.

Following discussion, the PSC AGREED to APPROVE the White paper on the procedures and criteria relating to delegation of authority for consultation and also, following consultation, recommendation to the Board.

6.2 QA Guidelines

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Sector specific QA Guidelines for Institutes of Technology
- Sector specific QA Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies

The members NOTED the suite of QA Guidelines presented and that they supplement the Core Guidelines previously presented to the members. To date the following statutory quality assurance guidelines have been published:

QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines

Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

Sector Specific QA Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers

Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes

The QA Guidelines on Flexible and Distance Learning require further discussion and development.

The members agreed that the guidelines presented for Institutes of Technology and Designated Awarding Bodies represented a balanced approach and promote an integrated system of quality assurance and NOTED the importance of providing clarity in relation to linked arrangements between providers, universities and QQI.

The executive advised that development is underway on an interactive web version of the suite of QA guidelines to enhance accessibility and highlight the overall hierarchy of the guidelines with the core as central.

Following discussion, the PSC AGREED the Sector specific QA Guidelines for Institutes of Technology and for Designated Awarding Bodies for ADOPTION and PUBLICATION.

- White paper on Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Degrees

The members NOTED the paper in relation to the Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Degrees. The members agreed that the paper is detailed and extensive but consider some areas prescriptive and perhaps the inclusion of a more general narrative would be more suitable. The executive indicated that the paper needs slight updating and editing before going for consultation. The members considered the observations made during the course of discussion including: aspects of taught versus research doctorates; measurement of research can be complex; principal supervisor versus co-supervision; the importance of robust QA practices for transfer or upgrading to the next phase of research and doctoral programmes.

Following discussion, the members AGREED to Approve the Topic Specific QA Guidelines for Research Degrees for consultation subject to the above points being addressed and re-editing of the paper by the executive.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1.1 The PSC AGREED the re-scheduling of committee meeting from Wednesday 12th October 2016 to a later date in mid-November 2016 to accommodate completion of papers and standards. Members also agreed that the first committee meeting of 2017 should be scheduled for a date in February 2017. Proposed dates to be circulated and agreed.

In closing the Chairman thanked the members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their contributions and participation in the meeting. He further thanked the Registrar and staff of St. Patrick's College for their hospitality.