

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

Monday 28th September 2015

McCurdy Boardroom, Royal Marine Hotel, Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin

Present: James Moore - Board Member and Committee Chair

Jan S Levy - International Expert

Ewart Keep - International Expert

Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert

Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert

Marie Bourke - National Expert

Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member

Peter Cullen - QQI Key Executive

In attendance: Ann Graves - QQI Secretary

Barbara Kelly - QQI

Roisin Sweeney – QQI

Claire Byrne – QQI (Item 7.2)

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed the members.

1 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 11 June 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of 11 June 2015 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes

2.1 The PSC NOTED that QQI is awaiting a response from the Department of Education and Skills on the changes sought by QQI to legislation in relation to power to recognise within the National Framework of Qualifications.

2.2 The PSC NOTED that the first five craft programmes were validated under the FETAC “Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Further Education and Training Programmes Leading to QQI CAS Awards” (Revised October 2013), not the White Paper on Policy and Criteria for Programme Validation presented at the 11 June meeting of the PSC. Future apprenticeship programmes will be validated under the new policy when it is available. The PSC further NOTED that the published report including a number of conditions is published on the QQI website.

[Validation report Craft Awards](#)

2.3 Any other matters arising will be dealt with under the relevant items on the agenda.

3. Standards Determinations

In order to help engage all members actively in the in the deliberations, selected non-executive PSC members were requested to take a special interest in one or two documents from the agenda and present those documents to the Committee for the purpose of leading off the discussions. All members were still required to read and consider all the documents on the agenda.

Presentations concerning proposed awards standards were to include observations on:

- Soundness of the case for establishing a new standard
- Consistency with QQI's strategy
- Clarity for stakeholders of the new standard
- Suitability of the development and consultation process as described
- Questions about the proposed standard that warrant discussion at Committee

3.1 Awards Standards – NFQ Level 5 special purpose award in Implementing Food Safety Management Systems and NFQ Level 6 special purpose award in Designing Food Safety Management Systems

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made.

The Committee NOTED the consultation period and considered that although the standards development group was representative, in order to engage associations and industry in public consultation it may be prudent to consult over a longer period in future. The PSC commended the rationalisation of award standards in the food safety area. The PSC AGREED that for the purposes of clarity a summary of salient points from the public consultation would be useful for the committee in future determinations of awards standards.

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new awards standards NFQ Level 5 Specific Purpose Certificate Implementing Food Safety Management Systems and Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate Designing Food Safety Management Systems

3.2 QQI Guidelines for Pre-Higher Education Foundation Awards for International Students

The Committee NOTED the guidelines presented and considered the observations made.

The Committee NOTED that the executive is currently considering issuing the subject guidelines as statutory QQI awards standards to be accompanied by the guidelines and conditions for QQI validation of international foundation programmes. The QQI executive notes it is likely that it

will be necessary to make significant changes to the presentation of the document but only minor changes to the substantial content are envisaged.

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new awards standards for Framework awards following international foundation programmes and the guidelines and conditions for QQI validation of international foundation programmes—subject to ratification by the QQI Board if considered necessary by the executive.

4. Policy Development

The Committee NOTED that Policy Development would be discussed with the overall approach to policy at 29 September meeting.

5 Green Papers

There were no Green Papers for presentation to the Committee.

6. White Papers

There were no Green Papers for presentation to the Committee

7. Any Other Business

7.1 The Committee NOTED that the Quality Assurance and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012 is not sufficient to extend to non-Framework activities particularly in light of the implications of the January 2015 High Court ruling against QQI. The Committee further noted that QQI lacks an awarding body recognition function. QQI has proposed a form of words to the Department of Education and Skills in the form of an amendment to cover the use of the Framework.

The Committee NOTED the urgency of the need for change in legislation and further noted that this may be raised as a separate Act depending on political interest. The Chair AGREED to convey the concerns of the Committee to the Board.

7.2 The Committee NOTED the Questionnaire for QQI Committee Performance Evaluation circulated. The PSC welcomed the review of QQI committees, providing the opportunity to consider the complete QQI committee structure and considered it timely following a restructuring of staff which would ultimately lead to changes to executives on committees. The Committee reflected on the questionnaire and discussed the topics. The PSC NOTED that feedback from the meeting will feed into the finalised version of the questionnaire to be distributed to all committee members in October.

Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (Continued)
Tuesday 29th September 2015, Blackrock Further Education Institute

Present: James Moore - Board Member and Committee Chair

Jan S Levy - International Expert

Ewart Keep - International Expert

Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert

Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert

Marie Bourke - National Expert

Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member

In attendance: Ann Graves - QQI Secretary

Barbara Kelly - QQI

Roisin Sweeney – QQI

Trish O'Brien, QQI (Item 11)

John O'Connor, QQI (Item 12)

Apologies: Peter Cullen - QQI Key Executive

Deirdre Hanamy, Principal, Blackrock Further Education Institute welcomed the Committee members to BFEI.

In opening the meeting the Chairman thanked BFEI for their hospitality and welcomed the members.

The Chairman noted that this session would include a stock take of the work done to date by the Committee.

- 8 The PSC NOTED that Items 8, 9 and 10 on the Agenda would be taken together. The Committee NOTED the priorities identified in the Policy Structure circulated and the QQI Strategic Statement for 2016-18. The PSC further NOTED the areas for policy development for QQI and advocated maintaining contact with other policy makers to ensure consistency and to aid to identifying priority areas. The PSC NOTED the policies developed to date and recommended by the Committee and suggested that a future meeting could consider the policy schedule and the order in which policy is developed and the links between QQI policies. The PSC considered the context for policy and standards, where the role of the PSC fits into the overall structure including the three year plan for the QQI Board and where policies fit into the QQI strategy

- 9 The Committee NOTED the emergence of new apprenticeship models and that 25 proposals under Category 1 would be progressed. There are a number of questions for resolution by the Minister for Education and Skills but the timeframe aimed for completion remains end 2016. The next step will be development of programmes followed by validation by the relevant awarding body which may or may not be QQI. The PSC NOTED the importance of new models and areas for apprenticeships and the positive input this would have in the area of job creation.

- 10 The Committee NOTED that QQI has the statutory power to review and amend the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) if necessary. QQI will review the use and effects of the NFQ by 2016 including consideration of the purpose and the added value the NFQ is to wider policy development.

Following discussion the Committee NOTED that Qualifications Frameworks evolve with time and an approach for the review could best start with a look at what we would lose if we didn't have the NFQ including links to other frameworks. The PSC further NOTED that a review of the NFQ should include engagement by all sectors including those who could contribute an independent view. The PSC suggested that a review of the NFQ could usefully address the question of Level 6.

- 11 The Committee NOTED that the National Skills Strategy will be issuing a call for submissions and QQI should consider submitting.

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 Principal and staff of BFEI for their hospitality.

A doodle poll will be circulated to determine the next meeting of the PSC, which likely will take place in early December.