

**POLICIES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (PSC)**  
**Wednesday, 10 December, 2014 - 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**  
**Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2**

Present: James Moore (Chair) - Board Member and Committee Chair

Jan S Levy - International Expert

Ewart Keep - International Expert

Aidan Mulkeen - National Expert

Marie Bourke - National Expert

Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member

Peter Cullen - QQI Key Executive

In attendance: Ann Graves - QQI Secretary

Niamh Lenehan – QQI (for Item 6.1)

John O'Connor – QQI (for Item 9.1)

Apologies:: Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed the members.

**1 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 18 September 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting of 18 September 2014 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

**2. Matters Arising from Minutes**

2.1 The Committee NOTED that the QQI executive had prepared a substantial written response to the *SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019* and that this response has been adopted by the QQI Board and submitted to SOLAS.

2.2 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 – Award Standard - NFQ Level 5 Minor Award Standard: Safe Use of Pesticides

The Committee NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new awards standards for Safe Use of Pesticides at NFQ Level 5.

### 3.2 Awards Standards – NFQ Level 5 Minor Award Standards: Herd Recording in Pig Production, Pig Manure Management, Pig Nutrition, Housing and Welfare and Pig Industry

The PSC NOTED the standards presented and considered the observations made. The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the new award standards for *Herd Recording in Pig Production, Pig Manure Management, Pig Nutrition, Housing and Welfare and Pig Industry Structure at NFQ Level 5.*

The PSC NOTED that while there was no response to the public consultation in relation to the Pig award standards the input by stakeholders in the development, the strength of the expert group and the research and development in the subject area gave confidence that the development process was sound.

### 3.3 Awards Standards – Five Advanced Certificate Craft Awards at NFQ Level

- Advanced Certificate Craft Carpentry and Joinery
- Advanced Certificate Craft Electrical
- Advanced Certificate Craft Plumbing
- Advanced Certificate Craft Metal Fabrication
- Advanced Certificate Craft Heavy Vehicle Mechanic

The Committee NOTED the standards presented, the detailed reports of the external review groups on the award standards, and considered the observations made. The Committee NOTED

the issues raised by the process, for example, in relation to entry level, NFQ level of the standards, apprenticeship completion rates and progression. The Committee DECIDED to make its decision on the adoption the proposed standards following consideration of the award-type descriptors (Item 4.1). See Item 4.1.

#### 4. Award-type Descriptors (ATDs)

##### 4.1 Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 and

The COMMITTEE NOTED the award-type descriptors presented and the executive's comments on the consultation process and it considered the observations made.

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT the Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 subject to an amendment adding the term "*unpredictable change*" at NFQ level 6 in in the strand entitled "*draw insightful conclusions*" viz.:

*"Plan and develop investigative strategies and evaluate information to determine creative, evidence-informed solutions to predictable and unpredictable problems arising in professional activity that **respond to unpredictable change** and take due account of social, field-specific and ethical insights"*

The Committee AGREED to ADOPT new Awards Standards for the Five Advanced Certificate Craft Awards at NFQ Level 6 - Advanced Certificate Craft Carpentry and Joinery, Advanced Certificate Craft Electrical, Advanced Certificate Craft Plumbing, Advanced Certificate Craft Metal Fabrication and Advanced Certificate Craft Heavy Vehicle Mechanic subject to the condition that these awards standards must be used together with QQI's NFQ Level 6 Professional Award-type Descriptors i.e. both standards, the particular and the general, must be achieved for the craft awards.

The Committee NOTED that the ADOPTION of the five craft standards would be conditional on the apprenticeship programmes being validated against both the award standard and the professional award-type descriptors, that the validation process will be rigorous.

Other craft programmes (beyond the five considered above) may be validated solely against the professional award-type descriptors (i.e. against the generic standard). The Committee NOTED that intended programme learning outcomes for apprenticeship programmes validated against the professional award-type descriptors will not be presented to the Policy and Standards Committee for adoption. The Committee noted that draft policy for validation of apprenticeship programmes will come to it for discussion in due course.

**5. Subject Guidelines**

The Committee NOTED that the Guidelines for Pre-higher Education Foundation Awards for International Students had been deferred to allow for broader consultation.

**6 Policy**

Selected non-executive Committee members are requested to take a special interest in one or two documents and make a presentation to the meeting on these documents for the purpose of leading off the discussions. All members are still required to read and consider all the documents on the agenda.

The green/white paper presentations by Committee members include observations on

- Soundness of the case for a white/green paper
- Consistency with QQI's strategy and policy framework and
- Clarity of the green papers—will they lead to the important issues being aired during consultation
- Clarity of the draft policy, procedures and criteria in white papers—is this ready for recommendation to the Board now noting that minor changes may be made following public consultation
- Questions about the paper that warrant discussion at Committee

The Committee NOTED there had been no changes to the current policy development schedule presented to the September meeting.

**7 Green Papers**

There were no Green Papers for presentation to the Committee.

**8. White Papers**

8.1 White Paper QQI Policy for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (Explanatory Memorandum), (White Paper) (Review of feedback from consultation)

*(note Anne-Marie Ryan submitted a report electronically received after the meeting consistent with the agreement reached and circulated electronically to the Committee after the meeting)*

The Committee NOTED the White Paper presented and considered the observations made particularly in relation to projects within the ENIC/NARIC network. Following discussion the Committee AGREED to recommend the White Paper entitled "QQI Policy for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications" for public consultation and to the QQI Board.

8.2 Consultation feedback on the whitepapers approved at the 18 September meeting (Explanatory Memorandum IEM) (Board update document IEM)

The Committee NOTED the documents, the presentation and the observations made.

The Committee NOTED the *Policy for Determining Awards Standards* has been adopted by the QQI Board and NOTED that concerns had been expressed by some stakeholders during consultation about the statement in this policy that before a learner may receive any CAS award he or she must have acquired and where appropriate demonstrated all of the expected learning outcomes specified for the award.

**9. Comparison Report on the National Qualifications Framework (Bahrain) and the National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland)**

(Explanatory Memorandum) (Comparison Report)

The Committee NOTED the international collaboration and agreed it was a valuable engagement. The Committee APPROVED the report for publication.

**10 Governance**

10.1 Revised Terms of Reference, Policies and Standards Committee (Explanatory Memorandum) (Revised Terms of Reference)

The Committee NOTED the amendment to the TORs for the Committee agreed by the QQI Board to include specific reference to the Committee's role in determining award-type descriptors.

10.2 Framework Standards and Guidance Procedures Manual (Explanatory Memorandum) (Procedures Document)

The Committee NOTED the current edition of the "*Framework Standards and Guidance Procedures Manual*" (Version 1.0) developed and formally documented in response to risks identified in the QQI "*Internal Audit Report: DRAFT Qualifications and Recognition Cycle*" and AGREED the approach to standards development as documented.

**11 Any Other Business**

The Committee NOTED that the Schedule of Meetings previously agreed would remain unchanged and could be considered again in 2015.

The committee noted the low response rate to some of the consultation processes and advised the QQI executive to remain vigilant in targeting stakeholders to ensure that development and deliberation processes are adequately informed by stakeholders' views.

The Chairman thanked all members of the committee for their contributions throughout the year and extended his good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.