

## Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the twenty-third Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 15 April 2016 at 9.45 a.m. in the QQI Meeting Rooms, 10 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2.

**Present:**

- Mr. James Moore (Acting Chairperson)
- 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
- Mr. Jack Leahy
- Mr. Thomas McDermott

**Apologies:**

- Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)

**In attendance:**

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. Keith McCarthy (Item 1)
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Item 7-8)
- Ms. Celine Kelly (Item 8)
- Mr. Ultan Tuite (Item 7)

### INTRODUCTION

The Board noted that the Chairperson, Gordon Clark was unable to attend the meeting and as outlined in Schedule 1, (6(5)(b)) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the Board Members present, chose one of their number to be Chairperson of the meeting. Mr. James Moore was nominated as Chairperson by Dr. Barbara Brittingham and seconded by Mr. Jack Leahy. Mr. Moore accepted the role of Acting Chairperson.

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

## 1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 12 FEBRUARY 2016

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 12 February 2016 were **confirmed and signed** (by the Acting Chairperson).

## 2. NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 12 FEBRUARY 2016

The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 12 February 2016* for publication on the QQI website.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

### 3.1. Management Framework Agreement (MFA)

The Board noted that the MFA Review meeting which had been expected to take place in March had now been scheduled to take place on 20 April.

### 3.2. Tendering Process

The Board noted that the current financial services contract would be concluding in September 2016 and the Executive would be exploring tender options for this area which is to include financial analyst skills. In addition, the Executive is considering tender options for other business areas such as query handling and support services for EU projects.

### 3.3. Item omitted from this note

### 3.4. Board Performance Evaluation

The Board Meeting had been preceded by a Workshop on Board Performance Evaluation and the Board noted that a report on the outcomes of the workshop would be presented to the Board at its next meeting scheduled for 10 June 2016.

## 4. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

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

The Board noted the nomination by the Executive of Ms. Catherine MacEnri, from the Education and Skills Policy Unit within the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, to a vacancy on the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC). The Board **approved** the

nomination and welcomed the appointment which fills the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs nomination on the Committee.

## 5. **AUDIT AND RISK**

The Board noted the documents relating to **Audit and Risk**.

### 5.1. Financial Statements 2015

The Board noted the Audit Committee had, at its meeting on 1 April, considered and approved the Financial Statements 2015 subject to a number of amendments and had recommended the draft Statements to the Board for its approval.

The Board noted the Audit Committee's request that the Executive consider the recruitment of a permanent finance staff member under the Delegated Sanction Agreement (DSA) arrangements.

### 5.2. Internal Audit Report

The Board noted the Internal Audit Report on Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) and noted that the Executive is continuing to work with the Department of Education and Skills and other stakeholders in this area and an outline of the progress made to date was presented. The Board noted that the Executive had examined similar learner protection arrangements undertaken in other countries. The Board noted that PEL was among the changes to legislation currently being considered for proposal by the Department. The Board noted that a PEL arrangement had recently been agreed with the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) which would cover a significant number of HET providers.

The Board **approved** the Internal Audit Report on Protection of Enrolled Learners.

### 5.3. Items for Noting

The Board noted the update of the Audit Committee meeting held on 1 April 2016.

The Board noted the minutes of 13 November 2015 together with updates on the revised Risk Register project, testing of internal controls and the current Internal Audit plan.

## 6. BUDGET AND FINANCE

The Board noted the documents circulated and tabled which related to **Budget and Finance**.

### 6.1. State Grant

The Board noted the letter of 28 January 2016 from the Department of Education and Skills outlining the QQI grant allocation of €5.4m for 2016.

### 6.2. Operational Budget 2016

The Board noted the update on the development of the draft Budget 2016 and the main differences between the 2015 and 2016 analysis and layouts which are reflective of changes to the organisational structure and introduction of Unit budgets. The Board noted that the draft Budget had been developed in conjunction with the corporate planning process. The Board **approved** the QQI Budget for 2016.

The Board noted that the Executive was focusing on a financial analysis and fee income prediction project.

### 6.3. Financial Statements 2015

The Board noted that the draft Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 had been cleared by the QQI Audit Committee. The Board noted that the statements had been drafted under the new accounting standards, FRS102.

The Board **approved** the draft Financial Statements for 2015 in principle, for signature by the Chairperson and Chief Executive, subject to

- there being no material changes;
- to confirmation of QQI's compliance with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and;
- to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

## 7. HUMAN RESOURCES

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

### 7.1. Staffing

The Board noted that sanction had been received from DES to fill a number of vacancies under the new DSA arrangements. The Board noted that a temporary contract position would be commencing in the next week. The Board noted that Public Appointments Service was currently compiling new appointment panels which the Executive would consult when filling other vacancies. The Board noted that a number of other positions will be filled through internal competitions. The Board welcomed the developments. The Board noted that a meeting to brief staff on developments was arranged for Thursday, 21 April.

### 7.2. Item omitted from this note

### 7.3. Human Resource Strategy 2016-2018

The Board noted the draft Human Resource Strategy 2016-2018 and briefing provided by the Executive. The Board welcomed the Strategy as a significant and important step for the organisation and **endorsed** the Strategy document.

## 8. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Board noted the document entitled **Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**.

### 8.1. Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI

The Board noted the draft Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI together with the Report on Consultation and Feedback on the White Paper on Validation. The Board noted that a significant amount of consultation with the sector had taken place and feedback received had been incorporated into the Policy document.

The Board discussed and **adopted** the Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI. The Board noted that the Executive would make any modifications considered necessary provided they were broadly

consistent with the adopted version and **agreed** to the redevelopment of the concept of *scope of provision* as set out in the supporting documentation.

## 9. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

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

### 9.1. Corporate Plan 2016

The Board noted the draft Corporate Plan for 2016 which had been revised on foot of discussions at the February 2016 Board Meeting and further consultation with Directors and Managers. The Board noted a progress report on Quarter 1 of 2016 would be presented to the Board for its information at the next Board Meeting. The Board noted that the Executive would consult with one of the Board Members in coming weeks on their experience using a particular planning reporting system.

### 9.2. Draft Annual Report 2015

The Board noted this was the final annual report to be delivered under the first QQI Strategy Statement 2014-2016.

The Board **approved** the draft Annual Report for 2015 and noted the Executive's intention that it would be forwarded to the Minister for Education and Skills by the end of June.

## 10. RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS (DES)

The Board noted the documents entitled **Relations with the Department of Education and Skills**.

The Board noted the latest draft of the Management Framework Agreement (MFA) for 2016. The Board noted that feedback on the draft agreement had been received from the Department and the Executive expects a final version to be produced and signed at an MFA Review Meeting scheduled for 20 April.

## **11. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

The Board noted the document relating to **Memorandums of Understanding**.

The Board noted the update on development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SOLAS. The Board noted that the draft MoU will follow a similar model to that of the MoU developed with the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The Board noted that a first draft had been considered at a meeting of the High Level Group (CEOs and Directors) of both agencies and the next step was the compilation of feedback on the draft from Management level of both agencies. The Board noted that an MoU implementation plan would also be considered.

The Board noted that the Executive expects that the final draft Memorandum will be presented to the Boards of the two agencies for consideration at their September 2016 Board Meetings. The Board noted the Executive had welcomed the opportunity to enhance the relationship between the two agencies.

## **12. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION**

The Board noted the document related to, **Communications and Information Strategy**.

The Board noted the update on the QQI Award Brand campaign. The Board noted that the Executive was developing the next stages of the project, namely:

- Monitoring of the use of QQI Award Brand information on provider websites;
- Correspondence to relevant Departments, State Agencies etc. informing them of correct referencing to QQI on websites and in communications and
- Development of a promotional roadshow for key education and training events to the end of 2016.

The Board requested that the Executive provide a report on the statistics relating to QQI's QHelp facility which featured in the draft Annual Report 2015.

### 13. FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Board noted the document related to **Further Education and Training**.

The Board noted the update on engagement with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

### 14. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

#### 14.1. Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Approvals and Reviews Committee* held on 5 February 2016.

#### 14.2. Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Executive Committee* held on 23 February 2016.

#### 14.3. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the *Policies and Standards Committee* held on 29 February 2016.

#### 14.4. Programme and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the verbal report on the meeting of the *Programme and Awards Oversight Committee* held on 14 April 2016.

#### 14.5. QQI Report, March 2016: 'Quality in an Era of Diminishing Resources, Irish Higher Education 2008-15'

The Board noted the '*QQI Report on Quality in an Era of Diminishing Resources, Irish Higher Education 2008-15*' which was recently published. The Report was compiled from information already in the public domain, through analysis of internal quality review reports published by Irish public higher education institutions. The Board noted a number of media articles relating to the publication which were tabled at the meeting.

The Board discussed the possibility of compiling a similar publication relating to the Further Education and Training sector. The Executive undertook to consider options in relation to this.

14.6 Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the *Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events* (from 15 February to 13 April 2016).

14.7 Draft Board Agenda (June 2016) and Rolling Board Agenda 2016

The Board noted the draft Agenda for the Board Meeting scheduled for 10 June 2016. The Board also noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2016.

**15. NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 10 June 2016** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

16.1. External Presentation

The Board referred to the presentation by Tom Boland, CEO of the HEA, at the previous Board Meeting and noted that they had found it very useful. The Board requested that similar presentations from other sectors (e.g. SOLAS, ETBI) should be provided if possible. The Executive undertook to explore options.

16.2. Further Education and Training Enhancement Event

The Board noted that QQI had hosted, in association with the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), a Further Education and Training Enhancement event in Farmleigh on 6 April 2016. The event entitled 'Self Evaluation and Reflective Practice Seminar' explored the benefits of self-evaluation and reflective practice from strategic and operational perspectives and was targeted at the ETB sector. Representatives of all 16 ETBs were in attendance. The Board noted that the Executive had received very positive feedback following the event and was considering making this and a similar enhancement event for the HET sector, annual events.

## **17. REVIEWS**

The Board noted the document entitled **Section 46 Review of Validated Programmes at Named Provider**.

The Board noted the report of the Review Team and summary paper provided by the Executive. The Board noted that a review under Section 46 of the Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 of validated programmes was carried out at a Named Provider following concerns raised during monitoring activity and around low progression and completion rates on the provider's QQI programmes.

The Board noted the PAEC had considered and approved the recommendations of the Review Team at its meeting on 11 April and referred the recommendations to the Board for its decision.

The Board considered and **adopted** the review report and **approved** the recommendations of the Review Team to withdraw validation of programmes leading to QQI Awards offered by a Named Provider under Section 47(1) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The Board noted that the provider has, under Section 47(2), one month from receipt of formal notice of the proposed withdrawal of validation in which to make observations on the reasons for the proposed withdrawal. The matter will be brought to the Board again at its June 2016 meeting for consideration of any observations received.

**THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.**