

## Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the forty-fifth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 27 September 2019 at 10:00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

**Present:**

- Ms. Joanne Harmon (Chair)
- Dr. Pádraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Ms. Cliona Curley (Secretary)
- Dr. Barbara Brittingham
- Ms. Mary Danagher
- Mr. Blake Hodkinson
- Mr. Thomas McDermott
- Mr. Kevin McStravock
- Ms. Niamh O'Reilly
- Prof. Irene Sheridan
- Dr. Anne Walsh

**Apologies:** No apologies

**In attendance:**

- Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. William Beausang (Item 1)
- Mr. Liam Butler (Item 8)
- Ms. Marie Gould (Item 18)
- Ms. Roisín Morris-Drennan (Item 17)
- Dr. Anna Murphy (Item 16)
- Ms. Maev Nic Lochlainn (Item 1)

### INTRODUCTION

The Board agreed that the agenda for the meeting was acceptable, with the exception of moving consideration of Audit and Risk to Item no. 16 and adopted same.

**1. PRESENTATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS (DES)**

Following a request by the Board, Mr. William Beausang, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education and Skills delivered a presentation to the Board. Ms. Maev Nic Lochlainn, Principal Officer in the Department was also in attendance.

The Board noted the Department's update on the amended Legislation and upcoming areas of focus and priorities for the Department into 2020.

The presentation was followed by a questions and answers session.

**2. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Board noted that two potential conflicts of interest were declared and the members involved undertook to excuse themselves from the relevant items in question.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING**

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 10 June 2019 were **confirmed and signed**.

**4. NOTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING**

The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 10 June 2019* for publication on the QQI website.

**5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Board noted the **Action Tracker**.

5.1. Action Tracker

The Board noted the updated Action Tracker.

**6. DRAFT BOARD AGENDA**

The Board noted the **Draft November 2019 Board Agenda**.

The Board noted that the meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee scheduled for 3 October had been cancelled. The Board noted that it was expected that the HR and Organisation Committee would meet ahead of the next Board Meeting.

## 7. CEO REPORT

The Board noted the **CEO Report**.

The Board noted that the Executive had recently published two new 'Insights' reports. 'Quality in Irish Higher Education: September 2019' provided an analysis of the 2019 Annual Institutional Quality Reports submitted by the publicly-regulated higher education institutions. 'Quality in Irish Further Education and Training 2019: A Summary of ETB Quality Reporting', captured QQI's observations on the 2019 Quality Improvement Plan Progress Reports provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the dialogue meetings held with each ETB earlier this year. The Board noted that the Executive had presented copies of the latter report to the Chief Executives of the ETBs at a meeting the week of 23 September.

The Board noted a briefing on a Protection for Enrolled Learners event which took place during August 2019. The Board noted that the revised Legislation contains a Corporate Fitness function which will allow the Executive to gather more pertinent information in relation to these matters which could assist in early warning of potential issues.

## 8. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

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

The Board noted the verbal overview of the work of the Approvals and Reviews Committee provided by a Committee Member. The Board noted that the revised Legislation will impact significantly on this Committee as new functions come onstream.

The Board also noted the report of the meeting of the Approvals and Reviews Committee held on 11 April 2019.

### 8.2. Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee held on 6 December 2018.

The Board also noted the Annual Report of the Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee for 2018.

8.3. Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the report of the meetings of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 13 June and 18 July 2019.

8.4. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee held on 25 June 2019.

8.5. Rolling Board Agenda 2019

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2019.

## 9. **ENQA REVIEW**

The Executive provided a verbal update on the **ENQA Review**.

The Board noted the letter of 7 August 2019 from Christoph Grolimund, President of ENQA to the Chief Executive together with the final report of the Review Panel, copies of which were provided at the meeting. The Board noted the findings of the Review Panel, namely that it found QQI to be in full compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) except in two areas where the judgement was substantially compliant. Those areas were '3.5 Resources' and '2.3 Implementing Processes'. The Board noted the following recommendations of the Panel:

### *3.5 Resources*

*QQI is recommended to continue to work with the Department of Education and Skills to improve the funding model so that the agency can take a longer term approach to planning and not be so vulnerable to the fluctuations in on-demand income.*

### *2.3 Implementing processes*

*QQI is recommended to accelerate and complete reengagement and institutional review with independent providers.*

The Board noted the recommendations relate to the continuation of work with DES to improve QQI's funding model and the completion of the re-engagement and institutional review process with independent providers. The Board noted that the Review Panel had noted that a lack of resources was key to not progressing the re-engagement project further. The Board noted the update on re-engagement provided by the Executive. Seven providers have completed the process with QQI since the ENQA site-visit had taken place in March 2019.

The Board noted the Executive's belief that the re-engagement process with the private HE sector will be complete by the time of submission of the required follow-up report to ENQA in June 2021.

The Board noted that the overall outcome of the review was very good and found the process very helpful. The Chairperson congratulated the Board, staff and Executive on the outcome, observing that it was a fantastic collective achievement of the Organisation.

#### **10. BOARD MEETS WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRESENT**

The Chair updated the Board on routine CEO performance management process and outcomes.

#### **11. BUDGET AND FINANCE**

The Board noted the update on **Budget and Finance**.

##### 11.1 Financial Report to 31 August 2019

The Board noted the financial report for the eight months ended 31 August 2019. The Board noted that expenditure is currently expected to be in line with income by year end.

##### 11.2. Review of Funding Model

The Board noted the verbal update on the review of the funding model. The Board noted that a request for tender issued and the Executive had subsequently appointed a supplier following a competitive tendering process. Work on the review had commenced. The Board noted that the Executive expected to receive the final report by the end of October 2019 and the report would be used to inform discussions with the Department. The Board noted that the report would be presented to the Board at its November 2019 Board Meeting.

## **12. ORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

The Board noted the update on **Organisation and Human Resources**.

Item omitted from this note.

### 12.1. Update on Human Resources

The Board noted an update on staffing. The Board noted that the Workforce Planning Report had been submitted to the Department in July.

## **13. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The Board noted the documents relating to **Strategic Planning**.

### 13.1. Corporate Plan 2019

The Board noted the Q2 and interim Q3 Progress Report for the 2019 Corporate Plan. The Board noted that a small number of actions had been delayed and many were completed as expected.

## **14. RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

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

### 14.1. Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) 2019

The Board noted the mid-year PDA review meeting between the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary from the Department and the Chairperson and Chief Executive of QQI had taken place on 12 September 2019. The meeting had been useful and provided another opportunity to discuss financial and human resource requirements likely to arise during the initial phase of some of the new functions. The Board noted that a Working Group on the Implementation of the QQA Act 2019 had been established including members from QQI and the Department and the Executive had agreed Terms of Reference for the Group.

### 14.2. Meeting of 4 July 2019

The Board noted that the Chairperson and the Chief Executive had meet with the Assistant Secretary and staff from the relevant DES section on 4 July to discuss in more detail the Workforce Planning Report, the QQI funding model and the upcoming amended Legislation which was enacted later that month. The meeting was an opportunity to assist the Executive in

making a case for the relevant resources which will be required to roll out the new functions contained in the amended Legislation. The Board noted that having the Legislation not commenced as yet allows time to put the required resources in place.

## 15. GOVERNANCE

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

*A Board Member withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.*

### 15.1. Update on Revised Legislation

The Board noted the verbal update provided by the Executive together with a copy of the revised Legislation, the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. The Board noted that while the Legislation had been signed in July 2019, commencement of the Act was likely to be on a phased basis. The only section enacted to date was Section 37 which allowed the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) to make an application for a University Authorisation Order. The Board noted that commencement was dependent on Ministerial Order(s) but noted that a number of low cost pieces of work could be done initially e.g. the withdrawal of validation for programmes no longer offered or where a programme has been revalidated. It was recognised by both the Executive and the Department that funding and resources would be required for certain areas e.g. Corporate Fitness, Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL), the International Education Mark (IEM).

### 15.2. Committee Membership

The Board noted and discussed upcoming vacancies on the Approvals and Reviews Committee.

The Board **approved** the extension of the membership terms of Kevin Ryan and Martin Lyes for two months to 31 December 2019 and of Marie Kehoe-O'Sullivan by one year to 2 November 2020.

The Board **approved** the appointment of Kevin McStravock, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, USI to the ARC. Mr. McStravock replaces Oisín Hassan, the previous USI representative on the Board and the ARC.

### 15.3. Self-Assessment Evaluation of Committee Performance 2018

The Board noted the outcomes and recommendations arising from the annual self-assessment evaluation of the performance of the four Committees (PAEC, PAOC, ARC and PSC) for 2018.

### 15.4. Review of Committee Structure

The Board noted the compilation of activities conducted to date by Committees which had been requested by the Board at its meeting in June 2019. The Board noted that the consideration/noting of CINNTE follow-up reports should be added to the Terms of Reference for the ARC.

### 15.5. Board Papers

Following a brief discussion at the June Board Meeting, Board Members were provided with the opportunity to move entirely to electronic Board Meeting papers and documents versus a combination of electronic and hardcopy packs. Three Board Members opted to choose the fully electronic option and the Executive undertook to make the necessary arrangements.

## 16. **AUDIT AND RISK**

The Board noted the update on **Audit and Risk**.

### 16.1. Risk Register

The Board noted an update on the implementation of the Executive Action Plan on Risk and a revised Risk Register (dated September 2019) together with the Risk Register presented at the June Board Meeting. The Board had **approved** that Risk Register in June but due to time constraints, **agreed** to hold a further discussion on the item at its September Meeting.

The Board noted that the Executive was providing a revised Risk Register for information only and it had not yet been presented to the Audit and Risk Committee for consideration. The Board noted that there had been progress in the intervening months since the last Board Meeting, in refining the Register and noted that scores had been reduced on a number of risks following the implementation of some new controls. Two risks, however, are heavily dependent on support from and the decisions of DES and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Board noted that a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Compliance Audit is underway and the Executive had not adjusted that risk, in advance of the findings of the Audit.

The Board noted that the Risk Register is live and will change again as a result of the upcoming changes arising from the amended Legislation.

The Board noted the suggestion to remove the risk regarding the generation of evidence-based policies from the Register and suggested a rationale for this be explored.

The Board **approved** the Risk Register from June 2019 and noted the revised version which would be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting scheduled for 25 October 2019.

## **17. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

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

### 17.1. Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in the Education and Training Boards

The Board noted the draft Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and noted that the commencement of Quality Assurance reviews was an important step for the ETB sector. The Board discussed the upcoming review of the implementation and effectiveness of QA procedures and the Executive answered/clarified any queries raised by the Board.

The Board noted that recommendations to the draft Policy from the PSC had been incorporated where possible/appropriate within the final version. The Board **approved** the Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards and noted the Executive's intention to publish the Policy in October. The Board also noted that procedural guidelines for this process were being developed together with a Schedule of Reviews. The Executive expects to receive self-evaluation applications from ETBs by June 2020 with site visits commencing in early 2021. It is expected that approximately seven reviews would be completed between January and June 2021 with the remainder completed in the latter half of that year. The Board noted that this is an ambitious timeline particularly in light of resources but noted that the Executive wished to build on current momentum. Following this

phase of reviews, the Board noted that the Executive would evaluate the review process and reflect on the outcomes prior to determining the next phase of the cycle for the ETB sector.

The Board noted that the Executive was exploring elements such as options for the inclusion of members of ETB staff on review teams as an aid to capacity-building. The Board also noted that the Executive would look further next year at the role of the learner in the ETB review process and support for same. The Board noted that a fees model had been costed and was awaiting discussion with the relevant Departments.

#### 17.2. Policies and Guidelines Snapshot, June 2019

The Board noted the Policies and Guidelines Snapshot as at 25 June 2019 which had been compiled following a request by the PSC arising from their self-assessment evaluation process and was forwarded on foot of a request by the PSC Chairperson to the Board for its information.

### 18. **REVIEWS**

The Board noted the update on **Reviews**.

#### 18.1. CINNTE Reviews

The Board noted the following three CINNTE Review which had been published since April/May:

- Dublin City University (DCU) (consideration of this item had been deferred from the June 2019 Board Meeting),
- Maynooth University and
- Dundalk Institute of Technology.

The Board noted that there had been a number of media articles relating to some of the CINNTE Reviews carried out to date.

The Board noted that the CINNTE Review of NUI, Galway would be published in the coming weeks and the site visit for the Review of University College Dublin (UCD) was scheduled for October 2019. The Executive expects the final report for UCD to be completed by year end. The Board noted that as seven CINNTE Reviews will be completed by the end of 2019, the

Executive would begin work on a thematic synthesis in 2020. The Executive would look at general themes emerging which would help further inform the review process and continually considers ongoing enhancements to the process. The Board noted that the greatest difficulty with the process is often assembling the review panel and the calibre of members involved to date has been high which helps with acceptance of the process and its outcomes.

The Board noted there was a slight change in the CINNTE Review schedule in order to accommodate the establishment of TU Dublin earlier this year. The Board noted that the Executive had decided to review any new Technological Universities approximately 18 months on from their establishment. The Board noted that the Executive had met with TU Dublin in the previous week to commence planning of its review and noted that a Working Group had already been established at the university.

## **19. WITHDRAWAL OF VALIDATION**

The Board noted the document relating to the **Withdrawal of Validation**.

The Board noted and **approved** the withdrawal of validation of programmes under Section 47 of the 2012 Act from the inactive providers specified in the document provided to the Board and from specified expired programmes from current providers.

The Board noted that under the amended Legislation, once the relevant section is commenced, this process can be carried out automatically by the Executive without the need for Board approval. Providers can also trigger the withdrawal of validation of expired programmes themselves.

## **20. COMMUNICATIONS**

The Board noted the update on **Communications**.

### **20.1. Media Mentions**

The Board noted the media mentions published since the June 2019 Board Meeting.

## **21. NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Monday, 25 November 2019** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

The Board noted that the Executive would circulate options for Board Meeting dates in 2020 to Members in the coming days with a view to confirming the most suitable options at the November 2019 Board Meeting.

## **22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*A Board Member withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.*

### **22.1. Application – Munster Technological University (MTU)**

The Board noted a copy of correspondence from the Chairman of the Board of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to the Minister for Education and Skills dated 9 July 2019. The letter related to the report of the assessment by the Advisory Panel of the MTU application which had been considered by the Board of the HEA at its meeting of 2 July. The Board noted the Board of the HEA had suggested that the Minister postpone the granting of the TU application subject to amongst other suggestions, the Minister should request QQI to bring forward its planned external reviews (CINNTE Reviews) of the two IoTs, Cork and Tralee, in advance of any further decision on the proposed TU. The Board noted the contents of the letter and the request referring to QQI and amendment to the CINNTE Review Schedule.

The Board noted that the Executive could see no causes for concern in the Advisory Panel report in relation to QA issues. The Board noted that the providers in question had their QA procedures approved in 2016 and both had taken part in the Annual Dialogue Meetings in 2018. The Board noted that there was nothing in the report suggesting a need to amend the QQI Review schedule.

The Board noted the Executive's current policy in relation to CINNTE Reviews and TU applications – the review process is paused by the Executive once confirmation that a TU application has been made to the HEA. A CINNTE Review is now carried out 18 months following the establishment of a TU.

22.2. Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

The Board noted that the only section of the revised Legislation commenced to date was Section 37 of the amended Act – Authorisation to use Description: ‘University’.

The Board noted that an application from RCSI had been received by the Department of Education and Skills, who had sought the views of the Executive in relation to any aspects of the application relating to QQI’s area of responsibilities. The Executive confirmed that no issues had come to light in its dealings with RCSI in recent years and it would respond to the Department to that effect.

22.3. AONTAS

The Board noted that AONTAS was holding a Lifelong Learning Summit as part of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The event would take place in Croke Park Conference Centre on 18 November 2019 and Board Members would be invited to attend.

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