

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

**Note of the tenth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday,  
14 February 2014 at 14.00 pm in the Boardroom, QQI Office, 26/27 Denzille Lane,  
Dublin 2.**

**Present:**

- Mr. Gordon Clark (Chair)**
- Dr. Pdraig Walsh (Chief Executive)**
- Ms. Claire Byrne (Secretary)**
- Dr. Barbara Brittingham (attended via phone conferencing)**
- Ms. Una Buckley**
- Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan**
- Mr. James Moore**
- Ms. Cat O'Driscoll**

**Apologies:**

- Dr. Margaret Cullen**
- Ms. Mary Danagher**
- Ms. Joanne Harmon**

**In attendance:**

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)**
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Item 7)**
- Ms. Barbara Kelly (Item 9)**

**Introduction**

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, expressed condolences to Joanne Harmon on the recent death of her father, Vincent Harmon.

The Chairperson welcomed Ann Louise Gilligan back to the Board following a period of illness and looked forward to the benefit of her experience and her contributions to the group. Dr. Gilligan thanked the Board and the Executive for the kindness and support shown to her over the past number of months.

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

**1. Minutes of the Meetings of 18 November and 17 December 2013**

The Minutes of the QQI Board Meetings held on 18 November and 17 December 2013 were confirmed and signed.

**2. Note of the Meetings of 18 November and 17 December 2013**

The Board approved the Notes of the Meetings of 18 November and 17 December 2013 for publication on the QQI website.

**3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

The Board noted an update on developments regarding SOLAS and its Further Education and Training Strategy. The Board noted that a draft Strategy was expected to be presented to the Board of SOLAS shortly.

The Board noted that the Chairperson and Chief Executive had met with the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills on 22 January 2014. The Board noted that work on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a Service Level Agreement between the Department and QQI is progressing. The Board noted that responsibility within the Department for QQI had moved from the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Unit to the Higher Education Equity of Access Unit. The Board welcomed the move and noted that some of the Department officials who were contact points for QQI were moving in tandem within the Department units.

The Board noted that the MoU between QQI and QAA had been activated. The Board noted that there had been a number of issues in the media in the UK which had some minor impact in Ireland and it had proved to be very beneficial for QQI to have had a point to point contact in QAA.

The Board noted, on foot of the consultation process and recent developments in the translation of specific set of professional award-type descriptors, the Policy Co-ordination Group had decided to defer the draft Policy and Criteria for Aligning Professional Awards with the NFQ at Levels 7, 8 and 9 to the April Board Meeting for decision, while further consultation took place. The Board noted that the Executive had decided to open the award-type descriptor translation exercise up to a wider national and international audience and was

planning to host a forum on the matter in mid-March in addition to appointing two new international reviewers to the process.

The Board noted that the Executive was continuing to progress the reassignment of the sub-lease for the Ground Floor office space at 10 Lower Mount Street.

#### **4. Board Performance Evaluation**

The Board noted the document relating to the Board Performance Evaluation. The Board noted the recommendations prepared on foot of the feedback received from the survey completed by Board Members in January 2014 as well as the discussions at the Board Workshop held in December 2013. The Board requested the inclusion of a further two recommendations to the document, the alignment of operations with budgets and the consideration of risk in a meaningful way – the Board noted that devolved budgeting within Business Sections and Units and QQI's Risk Register were both coming on stream during 2014. The Board welcomed the opportunities to evaluate and discuss their first year in office and had found it to be a very beneficial exercise. The Board discussed and agreed a way forward for each of the recommendations arising from the evaluation process. The Board noted that some of the recommendations will take effect as time passes and the body becomes more established and more committees and policies come on stream. The Board agreed, where possible, the approved recommendations should be used across the organisation's governance structure. The Board agreed to review the follow-up to these recommendations and its own performance again in one year's time.

The Board requested the Executive to continue to look at ways of streamlining information where possible and welcomed the recently published 'Snapshot – QQI's Comprehensive Policy Development Programme 2013-2014' as an example of this.

The Board agreed to consider draft agendas for subsequent Board meetings as part of the Board Meeting papers and agreed to put forward suggestions for any matters they may wish to discuss at future meetings. The Board requested more workshop type meetings as well as opportunities to meet with QQI stakeholders including staff, the Department of Education and Skills, the QQI Consultative Forum and representative bodies. Board Members highlighted the importance of

their gaining an understanding of the diversity of QQI stakeholders. Board Members also indicated a desire to focus attention on changes within the Education and Training sector and for the Executive to facilitate discussion on related matters. The Board noted that the first meeting of the QQI Consultative Forum is scheduled to take place on 1 April 2014 with the second meeting likely to be scheduled for October. The Board noted that as more QQI events take place, there will be more opportunity for Board Members to interact with stakeholders. The Board would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Minister for Education and Skills and the Secretary General of the Department on an annual basis. The Board noted the Executive's invitation to observe a providers' briefing session at a future date and also noted the Executive's intention to organise a Board workshop involving the Senior Management Team.

On foot of the request of a Board Member, the Executive confirmed that software had been adapted to record the QQI Corporate Plan objectives and outcomes and the Executive hoped to demonstrate the programme at the April Board Meeting, with quarterly reports appearing on the Board Meeting Agendas thereafter.

## **5. Committee Structure**

The Board noted the documents entitled Committee Structure. The Board noted the update on nominations to the various committees and also noted that the Chairperson will, in the coming weeks, discuss with Dr. Gilligan her involvement on QQI committees.

The Board noted that the Chief Executive, Dr. Pádraig Walsh would chair the QQI Consultative Forum and it was proposed that an external facilitator would be appointed to assist the process. The Board noted that invitations were issuing shortly to representative bodies seeking nominations to the Consultative Forum.

The Board noted that the membership of the Programme and Awards Oversight Committee was virtually finalised and the Policies and Standards Committee was populated and scheduled to meet for the first time on 20 March. The Board noted the Approval and Reviews Committee was not yet established, largely as the application process for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards had only recently opened. It is expected that the first

meeting of this Committee was likely to take place between the April and June 2014 Board Meetings. The Board noted that the International Education Mark (IEM) was on schedule to be developed during 2014.

The Board noted that when the sub-Board Committee structure was first developed, a structure containing five committees, including a Recourse and Reviews Committee, was proposed. The purpose of the Recourse and Reviews Committee was to perform such of the Board's functions as to ensure that a transparent and comprehensive process was in place for helping to resolve disputes arising from certain decisions made in the administration of QQI's functions. The Board noted that following the Executive's receipt from the Department of Education and Skills of a draft of the Statutory Instrument for the establishment of the Appeals Panel and further consideration of the Terms of Reference for the Recourse and Review Committee, by the Executive's Governance Working Group, the Executive discovered that the Recourse and Reviews Committee would now only have a role with regards to the following:

- Refusal to validate programmes (Section 45),
- Refusal to grant the International Education mark (IEM) (Section 61),
- Refusal to grant the Accreditation and Co-ordination of English Language Services recognition (ACELS) and
- Refusal to grant recognition in the Framework.

The Board noted that having identified the narrow breadth of its remit, it was proposed that the functions proposed for the Recourse and Review Committee could now be accommodated by the existing elements of the Committee structure and presented revised Terms of Reference for the following Committees incorporating the re-assigned functions (listed above):

- Programme and Awards Executive Committee
- Programme and Awards Oversight Committee
- Approval and Reviews Committee

The Board approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference for the three committees together with the modification to the Board's list of Reserved Functions to incorporate the withdrawal of ACELS recognition and the withdrawal of recognition in the Framework (both non-statutory functions).

## **6. Initial Programme Validation**

The Board noted the document entitled Initial Programme Validation. The Board noted that even though the initial programme validation process was now open, there were still several legacy applications in the system. Under the legacy HETAC process, providers were recognised following approval of both their QA system and the approval of their first programme validation. The Board noted the Programme and Awards Executive Committee, at its meeting on 5 February 2014, approved a Bachelor of Business – NFQ, Level 7, Major Award – at Galway Business School, for validation subject to clarification on a number of issues. Following approval of both the Institutional Evaluation Report (by the HETAC Academic Committee on 12 October 2012) and the initial programme validation, the Board approved Galway Business School as a new provider of a programme leading to a QQI Award under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The Board noted that in future, new applicants for initial programme validation etc. will be referred to the Approvals and Review Committee once established, for consideration.

## **7. Budget and Finance**

The Board noted the document entitled Update on Budget and Finance. The Board noted that the NQAI and HETAC cessation accounts for 2012 had been signed off by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General without the issuance of a management letter in either case. Both sets of accounts had been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Board noted that the C&AG Office was continuing to work to clear the FETAC 2011 Financial Statements followed by the 2012 FETAC Financial Statements by the end of February 2014. The Board noted that delays on the sign off of the 2011 and 2012 FETAC Financial Statements will delay the preparation of the QQI Financial Statements for 2013.

The Board noted the letter of 9 January 2014 from the Department of Education and Skills confirming the 2014 State Grant of €7.220m resulting in a slight reduction on the State Grant for 2013.

The Board noted that QQI's staffing levels under the Employment Control Framework (ECF) had been discussed during the meeting between the Chair, Chief Executive and Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills in January, where it was recognised that the ECF level for QQI is a significant challenge for the organisation in fulfilling its remit.

The Board noted that the Executive intended to have a draft budget in place by end of February 2014. Comparisons with 2013 out-turn will serve little to guide the process as some activities under QQI's statutory remit were limited during 2013. Therefore, the draft QQI expenditure budget and devolved budgets may require ongoing adjustments to year end. The Board welcomed the news that devolved budgeting would be put in place during 2014 with training for Managers and Units taking place shortly and looked forward to seeing the outcome once embedded.

The Board approved the extension of existing contracts for ICT contract resources in accordance with public procurement rules, for a period of six months from 1 March to 31 August 2014. The Board noted that these requirements would be reviewed in May 2014. The Board noted that the Executive was due to go to tender for ICT services again in 2015. The Board noted that approval for the 2013 ICT budget had been received in January 2014 from the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD) in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

## **8. ENQA Review**

The Board noted the documents relating to the ENQA Review. The Board noted the Draft Self-Evaluation Report and that the Executive was continuing to edit the document prior to submission to ENQA at the end of February. The Board noted that the Executive expects to hear of the appointment of the Review Panel and Chairperson shortly, with the site visit expected to be scheduled for early May. On foot of the discussion on the Self-Evaluation Report, a Board Member requested that the Review of Reviews Report appear on the agenda for discussion at the next Board Meeting scheduled for 11 April 2014. The Board noted that the Review of Reviews Report is currently being finalised and would be sent to the Executive within the next few weeks for factual accuracy checks and would be published shortly thereafter. The Report will contain options for

QQI's future Review process. The Board noted that the Executive would notify the Board as soon as possible regarding the availability of timeslots during the site visit to meet the Review Panel in May. The Board was satisfied that the draft Self-Evaluation Report addressed QQI's compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines.

## **9. Enterprise Engagement**

The Board noted the document entitled Enterprise Engagement – A Strategic Approach. The Board welcomed the paper as a useful starting point for QQI in its engagement with enterprise and employers. The Board discussed the strategy proposed and noted that it was an opportune time for QQI to focus on Enterprise Engagement while the education and training sector undergoes a period of major restructuring. The Board noted the three actions and projects the Executive intends to undertake to promote Enterprise Engagement within the education and training sector in 2014, including the publication of draft Guidelines for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Engagement for Higher Education and QQI's Enterprise Engagement Strategic Approach together with hosting a series of workshops for QQI Managers. Board Members suggested inclusion in the approach where possible, of the areas of social enterprise, work based learning, any appropriate outcomes from the Apprenticeship Review, the possibility of research support for regional employers through the IoT sector and non-construction craft occupations. The Board agreed that the Apprenticeship Review undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills was timely and would add to the initiative. The Chairperson thanked the Executive for all the work done to date and thanked the Board for its contribution which would prove extremely useful in this area.

## **10. Items for Confirmation**

The Board noted the Items for Confirmation. The Board confirmed the (decisions contained in the) Reports of the Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) Meetings held on 12 December 2013 and 5 February 2014. The Board noted that an analysis of all the decisions taken at the PAEC meetings would be provided to the Programme and Awards Oversight Committee approximately every six months.

## **11. Items for Noting**

The Board noted the document entitled Items for Noting. The Board noted the Progress Report on QQI Communications Strategy, the Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events, the draft Agenda for the QQI Board Meeting scheduled for 11 April 2014 and the updated QQI Rolling Board Agenda.

The Board noted that, under its communications strategy, the Executive was currently concentrating on developing its internal communications with sessions for staff taking place once a month over the next five months. The Board also noted that work was underway on revamping the QQI website.

The Board noted that, on foot of the discussions at today's meeting, the Executive would continue to provide draft agendas for upcoming Board Meetings and Members would be asked to contact the Board Secretariat, should they wish to bring attention to any items in particular. The Board noted that the Policies and Standards Committee will meet on 20 March and a report of that meeting will be presented to the Board at its April Meeting. The final version of the Self Evaluation Report for the ENQA Review and an item on the Review of Reviews will also appear on the agenda for the April Board Meeting.

The Executive noted the request of Board Members to hold workshops on some of the following items:

- The IoT Sector/Technological Universities Bill
- FE Reform/ETBs/SOLAS

## **12. Next Meeting**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Friday, 11 April 2014 beginning at 10:00 a.m.

### **13. Any Other Business**

The Executive informed the Board that it was in receipt of two invitations to appear before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection on consecutive weeks, 19 and 26 February. The Board noted that the meeting of 19 February was in relation to QQI Fees for Community and Voluntary Organisations and the session would also be attended by ICTU and the Department of Education and Skills. As the Chief Executive would be out of the country chairing an ENQA Board Meeting, the Joint Committee meeting would be attended by members of the Senior Management Team on his behalf. The Chief Executive would be in attendance at the second session scheduled for 26 February, which would deal with the role and potential of Community Education and Voluntary Education. This session would also be attended by ETBI, AONTAS, SOLAS and City and Guilds.

The Chairperson wished the representatives well for their meetings and thanked all Members for their inputs.

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

**Chairperson:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_