

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

**Note of the sixth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Monday, 29 July 2013 at 10.15 am 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**
- Ms. Una Buckley**
- Dr. Margaret Cullen**
- Mr. James Moore**
- Ms. Cat O'Driscoll**

**Apologies:**

- Ms. Mary Danagher**
- Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan**
- Ms. Joanne Harmon**

**In attendance:**

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)**
- Mr. Andrew Bridgett (Item 6)**
- Dr. Peter Cullen (Item 7)**
- Ms. Colette Harrison (Item 4)**
- Ms. Karena Maguire (Items 4, 5 and 8)**
- Ms. Trish O'Brien (Item 4 and 5)**
- Ms. Mary Sheridan (Item 4)**
- Dr. Deirdre Stritch (Item 4)**

**Introduction**

The Chairperson thanked Dr. Barbara Brittingham for her presentation on the New England/NEASC perspective of similar areas to those featured in the White Papers (Provider Access, Protection for Enrolled Learners and Fees for Services) scheduled for discussion later in the Board Meeting.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, welcomed Cat O'Driscoll, USI Vice President of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, to her first meeting as a member of the Board.

The Board noted that this meeting would focus heavily on the Comprehensive Policy Development Programme and the Committee Structure. The Board agreed that the Agenda for the meeting was acceptable and adopted same.

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 10 June 2013**

The Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting held on 10 June 2013 were confirmed and signed.

**2. Note of the Meeting of 10 June 2013**

The Board noted the Note of the Meeting of 10 June 2013 which was approved for publication on the QQI website.

**3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

The Board noted that the Chairperson, on foot of the discussions on the matter at the Board Meeting held on 10 June, had written to the Department of Education and Skills expressing the Board's concerns at the further reduction in QQI staffing numbers contained in the letter of 2 May 2013 from the Department.

The Board noted that the draft Communications Strategy scheduled to appear on the agenda for the July Board Meeting had been deferred for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 9 September 2013.

The Board noted that following its June meeting, the Executive had published the draft Strategy Statement for public consultation with the deadline of 19 July for feedback. The Board noted that a significant number of responses had been received and the matter would appear on the agenda for the September Board Meeting.

**4. Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**

*Karena Maguire, Head of Quality Assurance Services, Trish O'Brien, Head of Provider Relations, Colette Harrison, Quality Assurance Services and Deirdre Stritch and Mary Sheridan, Provider Relations, were present for this item.*

The Board noted the documents relating to the Comprehensive Policy Development Programme. The Board noted the background and update on the process to date, together with a presentation on each of the 3 Draft White Papers for consideration: Provider Access to Initial Programme Validation, Protection of Enrolled Learners and Fees for QQI Services. The Board noted that these 3 white papers set out new policies that were expedited to ensure that QQI would be in a position to publish the package of criteria and processes, including those from relevant legacy policies, that will underpin the consideration of applications from providers wishing to have access to programme validation and external quality assurance in early Autumn. The Board noted that the White Papers had been developed on foot of feedback received on the Green Papers.

The Board noted that the Executive had held, in addition to the general Consultation Sessions held in Dublin and Cork in May, several specialised Consultation Sessions aimed at providers hoping to apply for 'Relevant Provider' status once the process opened.

The Board noted the key developments and issues relating to each of the White Papers as a result of the changing education landscape.

The Board noted the change in title to the Provider Access paper and requested a further amendment to include '...leading to a QQI Award'. The Executive briefed the Board on a range of the issues and concerns which had been highlighted by stakeholders through the consultation process. The Board noted that Provider Access would be a two-stage process and the Board requested the Executive to ensure that this is communicated to all potential applicants early in the engagement process. The Board noted that legacy policies would still continue to be in use in some aspects of the application process in the medium term before also being redeveloped as part of the remaining suite of Green Papers.

The Board noted that the Executive would make it explicit to applicant providers that Provider Access is a two-stage process, stage 1 being approval of Quality Assurance Procedures and stage 2, validation of the first programme. The Board noted that the Executive would also be communicating that QQI is not the only route to gain accreditation of an award. The Board noted that the new legal term

'Relevant Provider' arising from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 replaces the previously used 'Registered Provider'.

The Board noted the background on the previous Learner Protection systems which were in place with the legacy agencies and noted that the 2012 Act had introduced some new elements such as extending learner protection to previously exempt categories. The legislation also strengthened the categories of information which the provider must publish for the benefit of learners. The Board noted that the Executive had sought legal advice on a number of specific issues contained in the legislation in relation to Protection of Enrolled Learners. The Board noted that the Executive had recently published Interim Procedures for Protection of Enrolled Learners on the QQI website. The Board noted that there was concern among stakeholders regarding the legal aspects of this requirement. The Board noted that the 2012 Act places greater emphasis upon the responsibility of providers to ensure that they have taken adequate steps to satisfy the requirements of Protection for Enrolled Learners.

The Board noted that Fees charged by QQI must be sanctioned by the Minister for Education and Skills and noted that the Executive had been in discussions with officials from the Department of Education and Skills who are consulting with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the matter. The Board noted that the Executive hopes to have a clearer picture of a schedule of fees by September 2013, if possible.

The Board noted that the consultation process on the remaining 14 Green Papers remains open until 13 September 2013 and the Executive would provide the Board with an update on that process at its next meeting scheduled for 9 September. The Board noted that a notification flagging the upcoming publication of the White Papers and the continuing consultation process on the remaining 14 Green Papers had been sent to all stakeholders within the past week. The Board instructed the Executive to proceed with the publication of the 3 White Papers for the next round of consultation scheduled to open the week beginning 5 August and noted the Executive's intention to present the final draft Policy and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Programme Validation leading to a QQI Award;

Protection of Enrolled Learners and Fees for QQI Services to the Board for its approval at its meeting scheduled for 9 September 2013.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked all the members of the Executive who had assisted the Board in their discussions on the matter.

## **5. Committees Structure**

*Trish O'Brien, Head of Provider Relations and Karena Maguire, Head of Quality Assurance Services were present for this item.*

The Board noted the documentation on the Establishment of Elements of Committees Structure and noted that the Executive was requesting the Board to deal with the finalisation of the committee structure and the respective terms of reference and membership criteria in a phased approach. The Board considered and agreed, subject to suggestions raised at the meeting, the Terms of Reference and associated materials in relation to the Programme & Awards Executive Committee, the Programme & Awards Oversight Committee and the Consultative Forum (working titles).

The Board requested the Executive to distinguish between sub-Committees of the Board and those which support the Executive. The Board also requested the Executive to develop workflows for the next Board Meeting which will assist Board Members in tracking the governance structure. The Board noted that the 2012 Act contained the stipulation that the proposed Committees must be approved by the Minister for Education and Skills. The Board noted that the involvement of Board Members on Committees would be added to the appendix as outlined. The Board noted that the Chairperson would be in contact with Board Members regarding their involvement on the proposed Committees. The Board noted that the Executive would present the proposed membership of the Programme & Awards Executive Committee to the September Board Meeting together with categories of membership for the Consultative Forum.

## **6. Audit and Risk (Audit Committee)**

*Andrew Bridgett, Audit and Procurement was present for this item.*

The Board noted the document relating to Audit and Risk. The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2013 together with a

report of the Audit Committee Meeting of 20 June 2013 presented by the Chairperson of the Audit Committee.

The Board noted the recommendation of the Audit Committee to appoint the successful tender applicant as the outsourced internal auditors of QQI in respect of certain internal audit services for the next 3 years with annual reviews, subject to contract. The Board approved the appointment.

## **7. Alignment**

*Peter Cullen, Qualifications Services, was present for this item.*

The Board noted the document entitled Board Approach to an Alignment Application. The Board noted the background information and the recent correspondence received in relation to an application for the alignment of a membership qualification with Level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The Board noted the applicant's request as to whether the applicant has the right to make an oral presentation to the Board. The Board confirmed that it would consider the alignment application by way of documentation only at its meeting scheduled for 9 September and that an oral presentation would not form part of the proceedings.

The Board noted that the Executive was working with a number of professional bodies to translate the legacy Professional Award Type Descriptors for their particular sector.

The Board requested the Executive to respond in writing to the applicant informing them of the Board's decision.

## **8. Reviews**

*Karena Maguire, Head of Quality Assurance Services was present for this item.*

The Board noted the AIR (Annual Institutional Report) Summary Report. The Board noted that this document was a summary of the Annual Institutional Reports prepared by each of the 7 Universities in line with legacy IUQB procedures. The Board noted that, following some minor amendments, Section 1 – Overview Analysis, would be published by the Executive. The Board noted that the Executive was extending the Annual Dialogue Meeting and AIR process to DIT and RCSI and was in discussions with the Institutes of Technology regarding

implementation of the process within that sector. The Board recognised that an annual reporting process may be beneficial in addition with the normal periodic cycle of reviews.

#### **9. Interim Advisory Group**

The Board noted the document entitled Recommendations made by the Interim Advisory Group, which included the draft minutes of the Interim Advisory Group meeting which had taken place on 25 June 2013.

The Board noted the minutes of 25 June and the recommendations proposed to the Chief Executive at this meeting. The Board noted that this was the final meeting of this group. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, expressed his thanks to the members of the Interim Advisory Group for their valuable contribution to QQI's work over the last 6 months.

#### **10. Extension of ICT Contracts**

The Board noted the briefing document relating to the Extension of ICT Contracts. The Board noted the background to the request for a further extension to contracts which it had previously approved at its meeting on 1 March 2013. The Board approved the extension of contracts for ICT contract resources from 1 October 2013 until end of January 2014, in accordance with QQI's Purchasing and Procurement Policy, subject to contract. The Board noted that ICT requirements will be reviewed in November 2013 and consideration will be given to requirements for extension of contracts or new contracts and any such requirements will be referred to the Board for its approval.

### **11. Suggested Schedule of QQI Board Meetings 2014**

The Board noted the draft Schedule of QQI Board Meetings 2014. The Board noted the dates of Board Meetings for 2014 suggested following discussions between the Chairperson and the Executive. The Board approved the proposed schedule of QQI Board Meetings dates for 2014 as follows:

Friday, 14 February 2014

Friday, 11 April

Friday, 13 June

Friday, 26 September

Friday, 28 November.

### **12. Board Rolling Agenda 2013-2014**

The Board noted the update to the QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2013-2014. The Board noted some items were being rescheduled due to the current workload and developments within the education sector.

### **13. Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events**

The Board noted the document entitled Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events.

The Board noted that the Chairperson had met with the Minister for Education and Skills on 15 July and the Chairperson summarised some of the key points which had been raised during the course of the meeting.

The Board also noted that the first informal meeting of the Chairs of some of the agencies under the auspices of the Department of Education and Skills had taken place at QQI Offices on 11 June. The Chairs of FAS, HEA, NCCA, QQI and SEC had met to discuss common interests and had agreed to meet on a regular basis. The Board noted that the group had arranged to meet again in September 2013.

**14. Next Meeting**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday, 9 September 2013 beginning at 10:00 a.m.

**15. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

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

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