

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

**Note of the seventh Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on  
Monday, 9 September 2013 at 10.00 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 (attended via phone conferencing)**
- Ms. Joanne Harmon**
- Mr. James Moore**
- Ms. Cat O'Driscoll**

**Apologies:**

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

**In attendance:**

- Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)**
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 9 and 10)**
- Ms. Grainne Cullen (Item 8)**
- Dr. Peter Cullen (Items 11 and 12)**
- Ms. Karena Maguire (Items 6 and 7)**
- Ms. Trish O'Brien (Items 6 and 7)**
- Dr. Deirdre Stritch (Item 7)**

**Introduction**

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

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 29 July 2013**

The Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting held on 29 July 2013 were confirmed and signed.

## **2. Note of the Meeting of 29 July 2013**

The Board noted the Note of the Meeting of 29 July 2013 which was approved for publication on the QQI website.

## **3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

The Board noted that all the matters arising from the previous minutes would be dealt with during the course of this meeting with the exception of item 8 – Reviews – AIR (Annual Institutional Report) Summary Report. The Board noted that the AIR Summary Report was currently going through the final round of editing and would be published later in the week.

## **4. Mission, Vision and Values**

*Anna Murphy, Head of Strategic Analysis, was present for this item.*

The Board noted the document entitled Mission, Vision and Values – Draft Strategy Statement. The Board noted that the public consultation process on the draft Strategy Statement had taken place over a period of three weeks during June and July. The Board noted that the Executive had received 55 responses from a wide range of stakeholders and noted that the Executive had taken feedback and suggestions on board. The Board noted that the Executive had tried to incorporate the large number of roles QQI plays, into its Strategy Statement.

The Board noted that members of the Executive had met with officials from the Department of Education and Skills, on 21 August to discuss the Department's observations on the draft Statement and noted that the Department had been in favour of the Executive's intention to continue with a high level approach linking the Statement to the QQI Corporate Plan currently being drafted. The Board noted that once the Statement is approved it will be forwarded, in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, to the Minister for Education and Skills for his views.

The Board approved the draft Strategy Statement subject to amendments proposed by Board Members and that the Chairperson should approve the amendments to the document on the Board's behalf. The Board noted that, following the review by the Minister for Education and Skills, the final version of

the Statement would be presented to the Board for its approval at its next meeting scheduled for 18 November. The Board noted that in order to present the Strategy Statement visually for publication, some minor amendments may have to be made to the approved text.

## **5. Communications Strategy**

*Carr Communications were present for this item.*

The Board noted the document entitled Communications Strategy together with the presentation on the development of QQI's Communications Strategy delivered by Carr Communications. The Board noted that the team had been engaging with the Senior Management Team and staff to assist them in formulating a communications strategy best suited to the organisation. The speakers summarised the communications objectives and explained its crucial role in positioning QQI so that key audiences understand the vital role that QQI plays both nationally and internationally. The Board noted that Carr Communications would provide media training for key members of staff and noted the importance of developing effective internal communications within QQI in addition to the external dimension. The Board noted the early intention to run a series of workshops for staff as well as looking at external conferences and events. The Board noted the team's intention to explore the benefits of regional promotion and information provision as well as on a national level.

The Board noted that there would be some further interaction at senior manager level before the Communications Strategy would be finalised. The Board expressed interest in developing a way to communicate effectively with learners regarding the regulated and unregulated education sectors.

The Board thanked Carr Communications for their presentation and looked forward to the next stages of this process.

## **6. Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**

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

The Board noted the documents relating to the Comprehensive Policy Development Programme together with a brief presentation on feedback received following the public consultation process on the White Papers for

Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programme Leading to QQI Awards, Protection for Enrolled Learners and Fees for QQI Services. The Board noted that the Executive had received 76 submissions from 43 stakeholders across the three policy areas. The Board noted that the feedback had been reviewed internally by the Policy Reference Group and the Policy Co-ordination Group as well as the draft policies undergoing a review for plain English editing.

The Board noted the key amendments to each of the Policy documents, resulting from the feedback received. The Board noted that the Executive intends to open the Provider Access process the week of 23 September with the intention of hosting the first briefing session for potential applicants in early October.

The Board agreed that should any further changes be required to the policy documents, the Chairperson should approve them on the Board's behalf.

The Board noted the Policy on Protection for Enrolled Learners received the largest number of feedback submissions and the Executive was inserting several notes into the draft policy to cover some of the issues which arose. The Board noted that feedback on this Policy had also been received from the Department of Education and Skills. The Board noted that the Executive was working on an implementation strategy and was putting a team in place to assist with the initial 6 month period following the roll out of the policy.

The Board noted that a schedule of fees for the initial policy areas together with a summary document outlining the context for the fees proposed had been submitted to the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). The Executive had responded with further information following some queries from DPER. The Board noted that the Executive had initially explored the fees impacting on the policies currently being considered at that day's meeting and fees for other policy areas would be examined at a future date.

The Board noted the Executive expected the issue of Relationship fees for existing providers to be examined in 2014.

The Board adopted the Policies for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programme Leading to QQI Awards, Protection for Enrolled Learners and Fees for QQI Services, subject to the Chair mandated notes and modifications.

## **7. Committees Structure**

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

The Board noted the documentation on the Establishment of Elements of Committees Structure together with a presentation on the workflows between the proposed Committees and the Board. The Board noted the draft Terms of Reference for the Programme & Awards Executive Committee, the Programme & Awards Oversight Committee and the Consultative Forum as well as indicative membership proposed for the Programme & Awards Executive Committee and the Consultative Forum. The Board noted a number of scenarios presented by the Executive which outlined the flow of work, recommendations and decisions between the Programme & Awards Executive Committee, the Programme & Awards Oversight Committee and the Board.

The Board noted that the Consultative Forum was intended to assist QQI by contributing to the development and implementation of an enhanced further and higher education and training and qualifications system through consultation and dialogue between QQI and stakeholders and noted that this was not a decision making body. The Board noted that the Executive proposed a rotating membership consisting of representation from stakeholder groups. The Board noted that the membership of the Programme and Awards Oversight Committee and the Consultative Forum would both be populated by invitation.

The Board noted that an Appeals Panel would be established by the Minister for Education and Skills to which QQI would provide the secretariat. The Department has informed QQI that this matter is progressing.

The Board approved, subject to any minor changes suggested which can be approved by the Chairperson on the Board's behalf, the Terms of Reference for the Programme & Awards Executive Committee, the Programme & Awards Oversight Committee and the Consultative Forum. The Board also agreed the

Board membership of the Programme & Awards Oversight Committee and noted that a full list of members would be presented to the Board for approval at its November 2013 Meeting.

#### **8. Progress Report**

*Grainne Cullen, Head of Planning was present for this item.*

The Board noted the document entitled QQI Bi-annual Progress Report. The Board noted that the Bi-annual Report provided an overview of the work completed by QQI in the six month period from January to June 2013 and the document assists the Executive in looking at the challenges for the next six month period and in planning for future activities. This report had provided the first opportunity for the organisation to look at itself and as the roll out of policy development and the implementation of a corporate plan continue, future reports are likely to be more analytical.

#### **9. Budget and Finance**

*Eamonn Collins, Corporate Business Manager, was present for this item.*

The Board noted the update on Budget and Finance which included a report on QQI budget activity to quarter end 30 June 2013 together with a briefing provided by the Executive.

#### **10. Human Resources**

*Eamonn Collins, Corporate Business Manager, was present for this item.*

The Board noted the update on Human Resources.

The Board noted that Executive had implemented the changes to staff terms and conditions which arose under the recent Haddington Road Agreement.

The Board noted that following a tendering process for the implementation of a change management and development programme for QQI, the successful tender applicant had been awarded the contract and would meet with the Senior Management Team on 11 September to present its approach following a training needs analysis, with Action Learning to be a central element of the upcoming programme.

## 11. Alignment

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

The Board noted the document relating to an Application for Alignment [of a Professional Qualification at NFQ Level 9]. The Board noted the background on the matter.

The Board noted that a number of Board Members had been approached by individuals outside of QQI in relation to this alignment application. Declarations of interests were recorded and the Board was satisfied that no conflicts of interests arose.

The Board considered the Expert Panel Report on the Evaluation of an Application for the Alignment of a Membership Qualification with Level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications, together with the applicant's response to the report.

The Board noted that the process leading to the Report had been less than ideal, involving considerable delay but that there were mitigating circumstances such as the amalgamation of the three legacy agencies, the establishment of QQI and the development of new policy on alignment (by HETAC) to improve the evaluation process. The Board was satisfied that the findings of the process for the evaluation of the 2009 application under HETAC's 2006 policy were reliable for the purpose of making a decision. Therefore, the Board endorsed the recommendation of the Expert Panel that the learning outcomes of the professional qualification as stated and assessed by the applicant body are not shown to be at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Board acknowledged the significant amount of effort, work and commitment of the applicant body in compiling the submission during the assessment process and the Panel's view that the applicant body has the potential to achieve Level 9 alignment for its learning outcomes, if the significant issues identified are addressed. The Board emphasised the need for QQI to complete the new process which will consider the alignment of the professional qualifications of a number of bodies in this sector and called upon the Executive to accelerate the

process which is already underway. The Board noted the applicant's right to appeal the Board's decision.

The Board noted that currently there is no QQI policy in place in relation to alignment, except the professional award-type descriptors that form part of the NFQ, following the enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 as the 2011 Alignment Policy ceased on 6 November 2012 upon the establishment of QQI.

The Executive outlined its intentions regarding a QQI Alignment process. The Board noted that a meeting was scheduled for later in the month to translate newly developed award type descriptors for a specific professional qualification area and this process may be expanded further to deal with other specialised areas. The Board noted that the Executive envisaged being able to re-open the alignment process in 2014 and requested the Executive to commence work on the White Paper for a QQI Alignment process.

## **12. Standards**

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

The Board noted the document entitled Interim Arrangements for QQI Administration of Standards Determination and Related Processes. The Board noted that the work of QQI, similar to that of the legacy agencies, includes the determination of Awards Standards. The Executive briefed the Board on its interim approach to Standards. The Board noted that, whereas Section 84 (Transitional and Savings Provision for Act of 1999) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 saved many of the policies of the legacy agencies, other policies which did not contain a statutory requirement such as the Policy and Criteria on Joint Awards were not saved. As such, the Executive felt it was important to have a continuing policy basis for this area and recommended the Board adopt the policy of the former HET Awards Council on an interim basis.

The Board, noting the policy deficiency relating to Joint Awards and, pending the establishment of the remainder of the governance structure, agreed the approach proposed by the Executive and adopted the Policy for Joint Awards of the former HET Awards Council on an interim basis.

The Board noted that the Executive had recently published on the QQI website, draft Awards Standards for Counselling and Psychotherapy for public consultation.

### **13. Board Performance and Evaluation**

The Board noted the document entitled Board Performance and Evaluation. The Board noted that the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies requires a Board to review on an annual basis, its own performance and that of its committees and individual members. The Board approved, subject to a minor amendment, the draft questionnaire proposed by the Executive. The Board noted that the secretariat would circulate the questionnaire to Board Members later in the year. A summary of feedback received together with any recommendations for consideration would be presented to the Board at its February 2014 Meeting.

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

The Board noted the update on the QQI Rolling Board Agenda 2013-2014. The Board noted that Appeals Panel item had been pushed out from its current scheduling as discussions on the matter continue with the Department of Education and Skills.

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

The Board noted the Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events. The Board noted that the Executive had met with the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN) in August and discussed among other matters, the QQI consultation process and this had proved useful in advance of the finalisation of the Strategy Statement and the three White Papers.

The Board noted that the Executive had met with senior staff from QAA (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK) and discussed matters such as collaborative and transnational provision and protection for enrolled learners. The Board noted that QQI and QAA were drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Executive hopes to present the draft MoU to the Board for noting at the meeting scheduled for 18 November 2013.

The Board noted that the Executive had also recently met with the Medical Council. The Board noted that under the 2012 Act, professional bodies are now required to engage with QQI on a more formal basis.

The Board noted that there had been a visit by a delegation composed of Council and Executive members from the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) who are also going through an amalgamation process.

**16. Next Meeting and Confirmation of QQI Board Meeting Schedule 2014**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday, 18 November 2013 beginning at 10:30 a.m.

The Board noted the Schedule of QQI Board Meetings 2014. The Board confirmed the dates of Board Meetings for 2014 following discussions on the proposed schedule at the meeting held on 29 July last as follows:

Friday, 14 February 2014

Friday, 11 April

Friday, 13 June

Friday, 26 September

Friday, 28 November.

The Board noted that the Executive would now begin to arrange dates for meetings of the newly established Committees.

**17. Any Other Business**

The Board noted the document entitled Memorandum of Understanding between QQI and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

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

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

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