

## Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the thirty eighth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 7 December 2018 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 (attended via phone conferencing, Items 2-12)
- Mr. Oisín Hassan
- Mr. Blake Hodkinson
- Mr. Thomas McDermott (attended via phone conferencing)
- Ms. Niamh O'Reilly
- Prof. Irene Sheridan
- Dr. Anne Walsh

**Apologies:** No apologies

**In attendance:**

- Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. Liam Butler (Item 8)
- Ms. Orla Lynch (Item 17)
- Ms. Karena Maguire (Item 12)
- Ms. Gráinne Mooney (Item 12)
- Ms. Mary Sheridan (Item 11)

### INTRODUCTION

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

#### 1. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Interim Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Mr. Paul O'Toole delivered a presentation to the Board as part of the commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding between QQI and the HEA. The presentation updated the Board on the

status of the upcoming revised/new HEA legislation and Technological Universities (TUs).  
Mr. O'Toole's presentation was followed by a questions and answers session.

The Board noted that the first Technological University, TU Dublin, will be established on 1 January 2019. The Board noted that QQI plays a statutory role in the application assessment process.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked Mr. O'Toole for his participation and contribution to the meeting.

## **2. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Board noted that one potential conflict of interest was declared.

## **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 21 SEPTEMBER 2018**

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 21 September 2018 were **confirmed and signed** subject to deletion of the word 'those' from the sentence '.....the Board noted the steps taken by the Executive in the process to recommend withdrawal of validation from specific providers who have been in active in validation and certification for at least 12 months and those who have confirmed.....' which appears under item 13 'Withdrawal of Validation'.

The sentence should now read:

'Following a request for clarification in relation to the process of identifying and confirming inactive programmes, the Board noted the steps taken by the Executive in the process to recommend withdrawal of validation from specific providers who have been inactive in validation and certification for at least 12 months and who have confirmed that they ceased operation of QQI validated programmes and noted the request of the Executive that the Board withdraw validation of those programmes.'

## **4. NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 21 SEPTEMBER 2018**

The Board **approved**, subject to the amendment outlined under item 3 above, the *Note of the Meeting of 21 September 2018* 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 update on the Action Tracker.

## 6. DRAFT BOARD AGENDA

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

### 6.1. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) Review 2019

The Board noted that the Executive would provide a further briefing session for the Board on the upcoming ENQA Review at its meeting scheduled for 15 February 2019.

## 7. BOARD MEETS WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRESENT

The Board discussed the format, timing and duration of its meetings in order to ensure that items of significant importance were granted sufficient time and depth on the agenda.

Reports from the sub-committees of the Board are to be dealt with earlier in meetings.

## 8. BUDGET AND FINANCE

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

Item omitted from this note.

The Executive briefed the Board on a financial matter which it had sought professional opinion on over the past number of weeks.

The Executive answered queries raised by the Board.

The Board noted that the Financial Statements for 2017 had not yet been signed off by the C&AG's Office and that it may not now be possible for the statements to be completed within the current calendar year.

The Board noted that the Executive would keep the Board updated on the matter.

8.1. Financial Report to 31 October 2018

The Board noted the Financial Report to 31 October 2018.

The Board noted that there was likely to be a surplus at year end in the region of €200,000, an improvement on the previous year.

8.2. Draft Budget 2019

The Board noted the Draft Budget for 2019. The Board also noted that the Budget was based on projected budgetary requirements which were submitted to DES in May 2018 and based on current projects, the figures were now running a significant shortfall. There had been no confirmation from DES as yet in relation to the State Grant allocation for 2019.

The Board noted that two pay awards were expected in 2019 which will, as a result, increase the salary bill.

The Board noted that there were some options for reducing the current draft Budget deficit.

The Board noted that the Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) 2018 end of year review meeting with DES was scheduled for 11 December 2018. The Executive also expected the Budget Estimates featuring confirmation of State Grant allocations to be published circa 14 or 15 December.

The draft Budget also contained no provisions for additional income which may be generated through the new functions expected following the enactment of the revised Legislation, many of those are expected to be self-funding. The Board noted that fees are set by QQI but are subject to the consent of the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The

charge for the International Education Mark (IEM) will be set by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The Board requested the Executive to provide it with information on the number of retirements expected over the next five years.

The Board noted that it may be problematic to be too restrictive on ICT expenditure as the business is heavily dependent on the service and has already been impacted by the previous expenditure restrictions in 2017/2018.

The Board noted that the Finance Manager is examining different ways to drawdown funding in order to maximise it.

The Board **approved** the draft Budget for 2019 subject to confirmation by DES of the State Grant allocation for 2019.

### 8.3. EU-funded Projects

The Board noted a report on EU-funded projects circulated under Item 11, Audit and Risk.

## 9. **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

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

### 9.1. Corporate Plan 2018

The Board noted the Q3 and interim Q4 Progress Reports for the 2018 Corporate Plan. The Board noted that the delivery of the joint project with HEIs on the Code of Practice for Research Degrees was delayed. It was noted that the Executive was endeavouring to finalise the project.

### 9.2. Draft Corporate Plan 2019

The Board noted the draft Corporate Plan for 2019 and noted that some actions contained within the Plan may now be impacted by the financial issues referred to

above. The Executive elaborated on a number of actions contained within the Plan, which were highlighted by Board Members.

The Board noted one action 'engage with and support the National Further Education and Training Learner Forum' was in association with AONTAS who would be holding regional meetings with the 16 ETBs on engagement with learners. The resulting meeting reports would be circulated to QQI for information.

The Board **approved** the Corporate Plan for 2019.

### 9.3. Accommodation Update

This item was not discussed.

## 10. GOVERNANCE

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

### 10.1. Board Performance Review 2018

The Board noted that the Executive would shortly circulate the annual Board Performance Review survey for 2018. It was noted that the survey is largely based on the sample survey contained within the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 and tailored to QQI's use.

### 10.2. Review of QQI Committee Structure

The Board noted that following a review of the committee structure completed in late 2015, the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Committees were amended to include a condition that 'the continued requirement for the xxxxxx Committee will be considered at the end of 2018 or in the intervening period at the request of the Board'. The Board noted that when including that condition, the Executive envisaged that a new Board would be in place from circa. November/December 2017 and that the proposed revised Legislation would have been enacted and the Committees would have been dealing with their full workload.

As there was a delay in appointing new Board Members (March 2018) and some of the Committees are only now seeing more of their workload to come on stream (e.g. ARC and the HE Review Cycle which has recently commenced), the Board **agreed** to defer the review of the sub-Board Committee structure by 12 months. It was noted that this will allow new Board Members more time to familiarise themselves with the current Committee structure and the committees to which they have been appointed. The Board noted that it also provides an opportunity for the Executive to incorporate any recommendations relating to the Committee Structure which may arise from the ENQA review in March 2019.

The Board also **approved** various amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC), Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC), Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC) and the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) which were recommended by the Executive, including an additional amendment relating to the membership of the PSC which was raised at the meeting.

#### 10.3. Appointment of new Committee Members

The Board **approved** the appointment of Ms. Aoife Sweeney to the Policies and Standards Committee. Ms. Sweeney replaces Ms. Ann Marie Ryan whose membership term on the Committee finishes with effect from 19 March 2019.

#### 10.4. Self-assessment Evaluation of Committee Performance 2017

The Board noted the outcomes of the PAOC self-assessment evaluation which had been outstanding at the time of the September Board Meeting.

### 11. **AUDIT AND RISK**

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

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Chairperson and members of the Audit and Risk Committee for the amount of work completed by the Committee during 2018.

#### 11.1. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Report of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 22 October 2018.

#### 11.2. Risk Register

The Board briefly discussed the draft Risk Register for 2018 (as at 22 October 2018). The Board noted the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee to defer the implementation of devolved budgeting at the present time.

The Board **approved** the *Risk Register* (as at year end 2018) and the associated top five risks for the organisation which will be published in the Annual Report for 2018.

#### 11.3. Internal Control Policy

The Board noted the draft Internal Control Policy recommended for its consideration by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Executive clarified any queries raised by the Board.

The Board **approved** the *Internal Control Policy* subject to the inclusion of a reference to Strategic Priority 4(d) 'Organisational Capacity (Best Practice)' contained in the Statement of Strategy 2019-2021.

#### 11.4. Corporate Procurement

The Board noted the draft Corporate Procurement Plan 2018-2020.

The Board noted that the focus of the document is on the procurement responsibilities of Directors and Budget holders. The Board agreed that training and communication of the Plan to staff was very important.

The Board **approved** the *QQI Corporate Procurement Plan 2018-2020*.

The Board also **approved** the revised *Purchasing and Procurement Policy and Procedures* subject to clarification in relation to a query on payment authorisation levels which was raised by a Board Member.

#### 11.5. Internal Audit Reports

The Board **approved** the following Internal Audit Reports as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee:

- Qualifications and Recognition (*including NARIC*) Cycle
- Awards and Certification Cycle
- Financial Reporting Cycle

#### 11.6. EU-Funded Projects

The report on EU-funded Projects was considered under Item 8, Budget and Finance, above.

#### 11.7. Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 12 June 2018.

### 12. **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Board noted the document entitled **Communications**.

#### 12.1. Communications Strategy

The Board noted the Communications Strategy discussion document which had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The Board noted the progress made in the area of Communications over the first five years since the establishment of QQI and the opportunity there was now to look at the next phase and to link the communications strategy to the new Statement of Strategy.

The Board discussed the matter.

The Board noted that the Executive had received positive feedback to changes implemented since the appointment of a dedicated Communications Manager. The Board noted that the Executive intended to grow its engagement with professional bodies and to complete a stakeholder mapping exercise encompassing its wide variety of stakeholders. The Executive would also engage in further work on challenges and key messages.

The Board suggested that the organisation should make more use of the term 'student' in addition to the statutory term 'learner'.

The Board suggested that the Executive should provide more information on its services to providers. The Board also suggested asking for assistance from providers.

The Board noted that the Executive has started work on a Communications Strategy and on mapping out the organisation's communications objectives. Another step is the development of individual communications plans for each sector.

The Board requested that an 'as is' status on communications activity is included in the Communications Strategy, so that it can measure and compare future activity against baseline metrics. The Board queried whether there was a brand awareness piece to be done, emphasising and promoting the value of QQI qualifications.

The Board also requested a chart/plan setting out the intended communications activities by Quarter. The Board requested the Executive to consider developing a baseline, metrics and targets. It was noted that there is currently a low baseline. The Board welcomed the establishment of the Stakeholder Engagement and Communications function as positive starting points for the development of a new Communication strategy.

The Board suggested that this was an opportunity to explore what QQI's message with the learner should be and that the Board can be valuable in teasing out the position. The Board also stressed the importance of the Communications strategy being embedded across the Organisation and led by Managers, with an emphasis on customer service and positive outward engagement.

The Board noted the Executive's view that the establishment of MoUs with similar agencies had proved to be extremely useful in improving stakeholder engagement.

The Executive thanked the Board for the discussion and feedback.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions. The Board noted that the Executive would work on the Strategy and would revert to the Chair with a draft for further feedback.

#### 12.2. Media Queries

The Board noted and **approved** the revised protocol for Board Members and staff in relation to dealing with media queries. The protocols had been updated following the appointment of a Communications Manager.

### 13. **WITHDRAWAL OF VALIDATION**

The Board noted the document entitled **Withdrawal of Validation**.

The Board noted that as part of an annual survey of providers on their plans for programme validations, the Executive had requested providers review their list of validated programmes and inform QQI of any which are not and will not be offered to learners and which should have their validation withdrawn. This ensures that information published through the QQI website is as accurate as possible. The Board **approved** the withdrawal of validation of the programmes specified under Section 47 of the 2012 Act.

### 14. **BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE 2019**

The Board noted the **Board Meeting Schedule 2019**, which was tabled at the meeting.

Following consultation by the Executive, the Board **approved** the following dates for 2019:

Monday, 10 June 2019

Monday, 25 November 2019

The Board noted that the Executive would be in contact with Members in the coming weeks with options for the September 2019 Board Meeting.

## 15. HUMAN RESOURCES

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

### 15.1. Human Resources

The Board noted an update on Human Resources and noted that there was a number of resignations, promotions and returning secondees over the past and next few weeks.

The Board noted that the Executive had reprofiled the assignments of some staff within the Management Group to progress the implementation of the new Statement of Strategy 2019-2021. The Board noted no changes were being made to the top-level organisational structure. It was noted that the Chief Executive had held one to one meetings with all Directors, Heads and Managers to discuss the strategic implementation plan in the last month and some staff adjustments were being made as a result. The Board noted that there were no general changes proposed at administrative level as yet.

## 16. RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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

### 16.1. Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018

The Board noted that following the closure of an English Language school within the previous week, the developments had impacted on the revised Legislation currently going through the Committee stage. The Board noted that an additional amendment was now being proposed requiring QQI to consult with Trade Unions in institutions with international students when developing the Code of Practice for the International Education Mark (IEM). The Board noted that it is not within QQI's remit to regulate employment law.

### 16.2. Chairpersons of Agencies Meeting, 14 November 2018

The Board noted that the Chair had attended a meeting between Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Joe McHugh T.D. and the Chairpersons from the agencies

under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills held on 14 November where there was a high-level discussion on the Department's Statement of Strategy for the period 2019-2021 and the accompanying Action/Implementation Plan for Education 2019.

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

The Board noted the draft Performance Delivery Agreement for 2019 which the Board **authorised** the Executive to proceed with finalising with the Department of Education and Skills. The Board noted a number of the activities contained within the PDA and the Corporate Plan relating to new functions in the revised Legislation have been assigned deadlines of 'commencement of Legislation plus six months'.

The Board noted that the Executive would discuss with DES the further retention of the mid-year Review meeting between the Secretary General/Assistant Secretary of the Department and the Chair/CEO of QQI.

### 17. **REVIEWS**

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

The Board noted the Institutional Review Reports for Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology, Sligo – the first two review reports published under the new CINNTE Review cycle. The Board noted that interactive quality profiles for the two Institutes had also been published on the website. As the meeting was running significantly over time, the Board **agreed** to defer consideration of this item to the February 2019 Board Meeting.

### 18. **ENQA REVIEW**

The Board noted the update on **ENQA Review**.

The Board noted that, following receipt of feedback from Board Members and the pre-screening scrutiny by ENQA, the Executive was finalising the Self-assessment Report (SAR) for the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) review

scheduled for March 2019. The Executive intends to submit the report to ENQA the week of 10 December 2018.

## 19. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

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

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the Approvals and Reviews Committee held on 19 July and 20 September 2018.

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

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Programme and Awards Oversight Committee held on 22 February 2018.

The Board also noted the Annual Report of the PAOC for 2017.

### 19.3. Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 25 September 2018.

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

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the Policies and Standards Committee held on 4 July and 27 September 2018.

### 19.5. Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)

The Board noted that a new Memorandum of Understanding had been agreed between QQI and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications.

19.6. CEO's Report (including Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events)

The Board noted the CEO's Report which provided an update on key developments in the two months since the September 2018 Board Meeting and which also included Media Mentions and Current and Forthcoming Events (from 24 September to 5 December 2018).

19.7. Rolling Board Agenda 2018

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2018 and a draft rolling agenda for 2019.

The Board expressed its intention to allocate extra attention/time to considering Committee reports at a future meeting on a rotational basis. The Board also suggested considering the CEO report at an earlier point in the agenda items. The Chief Executive requested that Board Members submit any areas they would like to see featured in the CEO report.

**20. NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 15 February 2019** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

**21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

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