

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the thirty third Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 23 February 2018 at 10.00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present: Dr. Barbara Brittingham (Chair)
Dr. Pdraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
Ms. Cliona Curley (Secretary)
Ms. Mary Danagher
Ms. Joanne Harmon
Mr. Oisín Hassan (Items 1-11)
Mr. Thomas McDermott

Apologies: No apologies

In attendance: Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
Mr. Andrew Bridgett (Item 10)
Mr. Eamonn Collins (Items 8-9)
Dr. Anna Murphy (Item 11)

INTRODUCTION

The Chief Executive welcomed Board Members to the Meeting and following confirmation that a quorum was in place, proceeded to the first item on the agenda.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON

The Board noted a new Chairperson of the Board and three members had not yet been appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills and as outlined in Schedule 1, (6(5)(b)) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the Board Members present, chose one of their number to be Chairperson of the meeting. Dr. Barbara Brittingham was chosen as Acting Chairperson.

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

2. APPOINTMENT OF BOARD SECRETARY

The Board noted that Cliona Curley had been appointed Director of Corporate Services with effect from 22 January 2018. The Chairperson welcomed Ms. Curley to the meeting and congratulated her on her appointment. The Board noted that this role would also normally be linked to that of the role of Board Secretary. The Board approved the appointment of Ms. Curley as Board Secretary. The Board thanked Therese Masterson for performing the role of interim Board Secretary for the previous year.

3. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board noted that no conflicts of interest were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 3 NOVEMBER 2017

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 3 November 2017 were **confirmed and signed**.

5. NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 3 NOVEMBER 2017

The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 3 November 2017* for publication on the QQI website.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Action Tracker

The Board noted the update on the **Action Tracker**.

The Board again discussed its need for a presentation on Apprenticeship programmes. The Executive noted the Board was anxious to get a better understanding of how the apprenticeship area was developing. The Executive proposed that it would be more beneficial to provide a presentation once a full Board was in place and the Board requested that the apprenticeship topic be dealt with separately to the annual attendance of the CEO of SOLAS, Paul O'Toole at a QQI Board Meeting. The Board noted that the Executive may look to devote the next meeting of the Board to the topic of Strategy and look at providing the presentation on another date.

The Board discussed the options relating to holding a Board Strategic Planning session which would form part of the development of the 2019-2021 Strategy Statement.

The Board suggested that if there is a new Board in place for the April Meeting, it may be more appropriate to hold its strategy session on a separate date.

The Board noted that responsibility for Facilities and Accommodation had since been assigned to the new Director of Corporate Services and while there had been no major developments with regard to the Accommodation Plan in the last few months (due in large part to QQI's financial situation), a contract had just been signed with a design company.

The Board noted that the Executive was also awaiting the Report of a Review of ICT arising from the Organisational Review. Recommendations arising from that Review may influence accommodation plans. The Board noted there would be a better evidence base for potential changes as a result of waiting for the review outcomes. The Board noted that the Executive expects to have an update for the April Board Meeting.

The Board noted that the draft Financial Statements for 2017 were reviewed by the CEO and the HR, Employee Engagement and Finance Manager on 22 February. The Board noted the Executive's intention to meet the submission deadline of 28 February in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. A Board Member raised a query in relation to the development of a Policy on the Review of the System of Internal Controls.

All other matters arising were covered within agenda items and were discussed during the meeting.

7. DRAFT BOARD AGENDA

The Board noted the **Draft April 2018 Board Agenda**.

The Board noted the initial draft Agenda for the Board Meeting scheduled for 27 April. The Board noted the contents of the draft Agenda may change should a full Board be appointed

in time and be in attendance for the next meeting or if a strategy session is linked to that Board meeting.

The Board suggested that it may have to look at strategy development during a separate meeting session. The Board noted that an induction session for new Board Members would also have to take place.

The Board noted that the Executive is very conscious of the timing of the development of its Strategy for the next three years and the lack of a full Board during the process.

The Board noted that following discussions with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Executive had been informed that the Minister would wish to have early sight of a draft strategy for his consideration and input. Any strategy developed would also have to be considered in light of the recently published DES Action Plan for Education 2018.

The Board noted that the Executive could aim to have an early draft statement in April for the Board's consideration. The Board highlighted the need for the Minister and the Department to be cognisant that QQI would need a fully populated Board to assist in developing its Strategy 2019-2021.

8. ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW OF QQI (ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS)

The Board noted the document entitled **Organisational Review of QQI and Related Matters**.

Items omitted from this note.

8.1. Staffing

The Board noted the update on staffing. The Board also noted that sanction had been received from the Department to fill the following vacancies:

- APO – Finance Manager
- APO – Stakeholder Engagement Division (Communications Manager)

- Grade VI – Finance Unit

in addition to a temporary six months contract for a Grade V post assigned to the Communications Unit.

The Board noted the vacancies were recently advertised with closing date of 1 March 2018 for applications. The Executive expected that interviews would take place in mid-March.

8.2. Staff Engagement

The Board noted an online staff resource was completed by the Executive and was well received by staff upon its launch in December 2017. The Board noted a feedback option had been included on the site, as suggested by the Board.

The Board noted that currently, there was some minor updating work to some HR policies taking place and also a number of staff workshops on topics such as mental health, mindfulness etc. had been held.

The Board noted the Executive's intention to hold Dignity and Respect Training again before the Summer as the last training session had taken place in 2014.

The Board also noted the Executive's intention to review the HR strategy.

8.3. Organisational Review/Organisational Review Steering Group

The Board noted the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 13 November and the draft Minutes of the Group's meeting held on 18 December 2017 together with a verbal report from a Steering Group member.

The Board noted much of the discussion at the Steering Group meeting in December had revolved around QQI's financial situation. The Group had also considered and discussed a report on QQI's international work and relationships. The Board receives, at each Board Meeting, a report detailing international work and where costs are recouped. The Board noted that DES had confirmed the value of the

international work that takes place. The Board noted that the first round of Cinnte Reviews had recently commenced and noted that the quality of the panels involved to date was in part as a result of the connections made through QQI's international work.

The Board noted that the next meeting of the Group was yet to be scheduled but would most likely feature the Review of ICT, once complete, and resolution of the IR Forum issues.

9. BUDGET AND FINANCE

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

9.1. Financial Statements 2016

The Board noted that the Financial Statements for 2016 had been cleared and signed by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in January 2018.

The Board noted that the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 27 February 2018.

9.2. Finance Report to 31 December 2017

The Board noted the Out-turn for the year ended 31 December 2017. The Board noted that the CEO, HR, Employee Engagement and Finance Manager and QQI's Accountant had met the previous day to review and finalise the draft Financial Statements for 2017 ahead of their submission to the C&AG and the Department by 28 February 2018. The Board noted that the Executive continues to remind DES that income from Certification fees can vary hugely and it will likely be mid-Summer before there would be a clear indication of the income from this source for the current year.

The Board noted that QQI is still awaiting Ministerial approval of certain fees. It was noted that the Executive cannot proceed with re-engagement with certain categories of providers as the fees have not yet been approved. The Board again noted the approximate amount of certification and fee income waived by QQI. The Board

expressed concern at the amount of time and resources spent on considering the funding model each year and suggested that the situation could be properly rectified by the Department if particular consideration was given to the figures involved.

The Board suggested that perhaps the Executive look at its funding model for the future as a result of the impact of fee waivers. The Board noted that the Executive was continuing to work on a funding model to make a case for the establishment of Relationship Fees for other sector(s). This would produce a significant amount of predictable income.

9.3. Budget 2018

The Board noted that the draft Budget 2018 presented to the Board in November was revised on foot of the confirmation by the Department of the State Grant for 2018 of €4.505 million. The Board noted that the Executive had re-examined projected expenditure in a number of areas and noted that it was unlikely that any new ICT projects would be progressed in 2018. The Board **approved** the draft Budget for 2018.

The Board noted the Executive's view that QQI could potentially be underfunded again in 2018. The Executive stated that it would continue to make a case to increase its State Grant.

10. AUDIT AND RISK

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

The Board noted a report of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting of 3 November 2017.

10.1. Risk Register

The Board noted the updated and revised Risk Register following consideration by the Executive Management Team (EMT) and taking account of developments and situations at year end. The Board noted that the Executive had considered that the revisions were more reflective of the organisation's position in December 2017. The

Board noted the requirement to include the top five risks for the organisation in the Annual Report for 2017.

The Board noted the presence of a significant number of high level risks and recommended that these risks help inform the development of the new Strategy.

The Board **approved** the Risk Register (as at year end 2017) and the associated top five risks for the organisation.

10.2. Internal Audit Report - Revenue Cycle

The Board noted that the Executive is continuing to examine the current funding model, as discussed above.

The Board **approved** the IA Report – Revenue Cycle.

10.3. Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 29 September 2017.

11. **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

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

11.1. Corporate Plan 2017

The Board noted the Q4 Progress report on the 2017 Corporate Plan. The Board noted that approximately 90% of actions within the Plan had been completed and those actions not commenced were due to external factors.

The Board noted that the Executive had visited all 16 ETBs in a four week period between November and December 2017. The Board noted that, to date, five ETBs had submitted requests for QA procedures to be approved, the remaining 11 ETBs were due to visit QQI in the coming weeks to finalise their arrangements. It was noted that the Executive expects that a number of the QA procedures will be

presented to the PAEC in April for approval with the remainder likely to be presented in June.

11.2. QQI Strategy Statement 2019-2021

The Board noted the update on process for the drafting of QQI's next Strategy Statement. The Board noted that an initial draft Strategy was being worked on by an internal design group in the first instance. Other steps for the development and design process include consultation and engagement with management and staff and external engagement. The Board noted that early informal discussions were taking place with a number of key stakeholders i.e. DES, HEA, SOLAS.

The Board noted that a meeting with seven representatives of the Department (representatives from the HE, FET, Skills and International Units) had taken place on 22 February where the Executive had received positive feedback on its engagement and work. The Board noted that the Executive had been informed that the Minister expects early sight of the draft strategy statement and an opportunity to input into the draft. The Board noted that the Department suggested that in terms of its strategy for the next three years, QQI should be cognisant of areas such as the IEM (early implementation), Brexit, developments in the EU agenda on education, skills, digital badges and work based learning. The Department also suggested consulting with other Departments including Justice, Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Foreign Affairs. The Board noted that the Executive felt that the meeting reinforced the value of early engagement with key stakeholders. There was also a sense that the Department had a strong interest in QQI taking a greater role in advising DES on the international agenda and was keen to explore where can QQI add value especially with the information we already have as a result of current work in this area.

The Executive noted that the Board expected to see draft goals and priorities and issues for its consideration and discussion at a Strategy Development session with members. The Board requested that the Executive also incorporate a review of the current Strategy as part of the development process, examine what the organisation does well and what impact it makes. The Executive was cognisant that new Board

Members may be joining the Board in the middle of the development process. The Board noted that the Executive is exploring options for external facilitators and noted that the Organisational Review Consultant was also involved in the strategy development process.

The Board noted that while previous QQI strategies highlighted the right areas for attention, the new Strategy needed to be sharper in the way it is constructed.

The Board noted that the Executive is also aware that upcoming legislative amendments could change the way QQI works during the three year period covered by the new strategy. The Executive further noted the volume of change in the external environment and its significant impact on resources. The Board **approved** the approach to strategy and noted that the Executive will revert with suggestions as to how to engage with the Board on the development of the Strategy 2019-2021.

12. GOVERNANCE

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

12.1. Appointment of Board Members 2017

The Board noted the verbal update in relation to Board Member appointments. The Board noted that the Executive had been informed informally that the Minister for Education and Skills had selected a Chairperson and new Board Members and the appointment process was currently being finalised. The Board noted that the Executive expected to receive confirmation of the appointments shortly.

12.2. Annual Board Self-Evaluation (2017)

The Board noted the responses received from the Board Member self-evaluation survey for 2017. The Board noted the response rate to the survey. The Board were largely satisfied with the responses and matters raised.

12.3. Appointments to QQI Committees

The Board discussed the proposed Committee appointments.

Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board **approved** the following appointments:

Róisín Sweeney, Carmel Kelly and Deirdre Stritch (extension of current term). These replace Karena Maguire and Andrina Wafer.

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board **approved** the appointment of Ms. Aileen Ponton to the Policies and Standards Committee. Ms. Ponton replaces Mr. Ewart Keep on the Committee.

Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

The Board **approved** the appointments of Ms. Gina Quin and Mr. Gerard Morgan to the Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee. Ms. Quin replaces Ms. Anne Mangan and Mr. Morgan replaces Ms. Conway on the Committee.

13. RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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

13.1. MFA 2017 and Draft Agreements for 2018

The Board noted that the final MFA Review meeting for 2017 had taken place on 21 December 2017. The Board noted that updates at the meeting had included discussions on staffing.

The Board noted that the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies requires State Bodies and their parent Departments to put in place an annual Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) and an Oversight Agreement (covering a three year period). The Board noted that the Executive had provided the Department with draft agreements for 2018 in December 2017.

The Board **authorised** the Executive to proceed with finalising the Agreements with the Department.

13.2. Department of Education and Skills – Action Plan 2018

The Board noted the Department had recently published its Action Plan for 2018. The Board noted a number of the Plan's activities where QQI was either the lead agency or was involved with a number of other agencies. The Review of Quality in Higher Education had been on the Department's agenda for a number of years and the Board noted that the Executive was working on including the Review in the QQI Corporate Plan for 2018.

14. **WITHDRAWAL OF VALIDATION**

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

The Board noted the steps taken by the Executive in the process to recommend withdrawal of validation from specific providers who have ceased operation of QQI validated programmes and noted the request of the Executive that the Board withdraw validation of those programmes. The Board **approved** the withdrawal of validation from the specified providers under Section 47 of the 2012 Act.

The Board noted that there may be some changes around this process as a result of the proposed amendments to the legislation.

15. **COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION**

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

15.1. Communications and Information

The Board noted the update on communications activities. The Board noted that the actions contained within the Communications and Information Strategy 2015-2017 were now complete and that the Executive expects to have a Communications Manager in place in the coming months.

16. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

16.1. Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 1 November and 8 December 2017.

16.2. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee held on 8 November 2017.

16.3. QQI Board and Committee Chairpersons Meeting

The Board noted the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of QQI Board and Committee Chairpersons held on 26 November 2016 together with the draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 November 2017.

16.4. Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events

The Board noted the Media Mentions, Key Developments, Current and Forthcoming Events (from 6 November 2017 – 23 February 2018).

16.5. Rolling Board Agendas 2017 and 2018

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agendas for 2017 and 2018.

16.6. PLC Programme Improvement Advisory Committee

The Board noted correspondence of 16 February 2018 to Pdraig Walsh from Mr. Andrew Brownlee, Executive Director, Strategy and Knowledge, SOLAS, seeking a nomination to the PLC Programme Improvement Committee. The Board noted that the QQI representative would be Karena Maguire.

17. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 27 April 2018** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.