

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the thirty seventh Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 21 September 2018 at 10.00 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present:

- Ms. Joanne Harmon (Chair)
- Dr. Padraig Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Ms. Cliona Curley (Secretary)
- Mr. Oisín Hassan
- Mr. Blake Hodkinson
- Mr. Thomas McDermott
- Ms. Niamh O'Reilly
- Prof. Irene Sheridan
- Dr. Anne Walsh

Apologies:

- Dr. Barbara Brittingham
- Ms. Mary Danagher

In attendance:

- Ms. Caitriona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Mr. Liam Butler (Item 9)
- Mr. Eamonn Collins (Item 8)
- Dr. Anna Murphy (Item 11)
- Ms. Mary Sheridan (Item 11)
- Mr. Giovanni Zaidan (part of Items 9 & 10)

INTRODUCTION

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

1. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Chief Executive of the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS), Mr. Paul O'Toole delivered a presentation to the Board as part of the commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding between QQI and SOLAS. The presentation updated the Board on developments in the further education and training sector since the publication of

the first Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy. The Board noted that SOLAS intends to begin work on the next FET Strategy shortly.

Mr. O'Toole's presentation was followed by a questions and answers session, the discussions included the areas of apprenticeship, further education and training, and strategy.

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 no conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 22 JUNE 2018

The *Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting* held on 22 June 2018 were **confirmed and signed**.

4. NOTE OF THE MEETING OF 22 JUNE 2018

The Board **approved** the *Note of the Meeting of 22 June 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 December 2018 Board Agenda**.

6.1. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The Board noted that the annual attendance by the CEO of HEA at a QQI Board Meeting (a feature of the MoU between QQI and HEA) which was scheduled for the

December 2018 Board Meeting was now going to be deferred. The Board requested an update on Technological Universities as a replacement.

6.2. Strategic Planning

The Board noted that a draft Corporate Plan for 2019 would be presented at the December 2018 Board Meeting.

6.3. Governance

The Board noted the Board Performance Review for 2018 would feature on the agenda for the next Board Meeting.

7. BOARD MEETS WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRESENT

The Chairperson updated the Board on the performance review of the CEO for the year 2018 to date and on CEO goals for the remainder of the year.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES

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

Items omitted from this note.

8.1. Human Resources

The Board noted an update on Human Resources and recent developments in the area of staffing.

8.2. IR Forum

The Board noted that a meeting of the IR Forum is scheduled for October.

8.3. Staff Engagement Forum

The Board noted that a number of HR Policies had been revised and developed. Consultation on Mobility and Recruitment policies was currently in progress. A policy on eWorking had recently been adopted and was being rolled out.

The Board noted that the Executive was applying for the IBEC Keepwell Mark initiative and had completed the self-assessment element of the process.

The Board noted the Executive's intention to conduct a staff survey which will also include, for benchmarking purposes, a number of questions from a Civil Service Staff Engagement Questionnaire.

8.4. Accommodation Update

The Board noted an update on the accommodation plans. The Board noted that the Executive was prioritising work on the Fourth Floor of the Mount Street premises and noted that the Executive had met with the architect in recent weeks. The Board noted that options to maximise the use of the Ground Floor in Mount Street were also being examined. The Executive expects to appoint a Quantity Surveyor shortly.

The Executive was exploring ways of maximising and utilising space in the buildings while being cognisant of value for money and the need to provide a workable space. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would be monitoring the project in light of a Value for Money Audit scheduled for 2019 (Q1).

9. **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

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

9.1. Financial Report to 30 June 2018

The Board noted the update to 30 June 2018 and brief overview of the current financial situation. The Board noted that there was a healthy cash position at the moment and that a small surplus at year end is currently anticipated. The Board noted the Executive's expectation that it will draw down the remainder of its grant over the next number of months.

The Board noted the current underspend under the ICT heading in the Financial Report. This is due to the decision taken at the end of 2017 to cap spending under this area. The Executive considered the budget heading to lend itself to project expenditure deferral for a period of time. It also facilitates commencement of

smaller projects if the financial situation was to change. Interim deferral of ICT contract and resource expenditure have now been reinstated.

The Board noted that the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee had requested a breakdown on EU projects for the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting and requested that the material be presented to the Board for its information.

9.2. Proposal for Tender of ICT Support Services

The Board noted QQI's reliance on ICT support services. The Executive initially tendered for these services in 2015 and the Board noted that the period covered under that tender is approaching conclusion at year end. The Board noted that the Executive was now considering increasing a number of work lots which were not included in the original tender and as a result was seeking Board approval to issue a new tender for provision of ICT support services for a two year period commencing 1 January 2019 as outlined in the proposal provided. The expected costs per annum for the proposed services were outlined by the Executive.

The Board noted that the Executive was reviewing the ICT Review recently completed (as part of the recommendations in the Organisational Review) and exploring options in relation to streamlining contracts. The Executive was also meeting with the Office of Government Procurement in the coming weeks with a view to exploring the current framework agreements relating to ICT shared service provision. The Board noted that depending on the outcome of these investigations, the Executive may be in a position to reduce the amount of work lots needed within the tendering process. The tender will be framed to allow for this potential adjustment.

The Executive clarified any queries Board Members raised.

The Board noted the Executive's intention to source an ICT Business Analyst by year end.

The Board **approved** the tender proposal for provision of ICT support services for a two year period commencing 1 April 2019 as outlined and allowed the Executive to

adjust if necessary depending on the outcomes of its discussions with the Office of Government Procurement.

The Board also **approved** the extension of the current support services contract to the end of Quarter 1, 2019 to ensure an appropriate handover period and facilitate the EU tender process.

10. AUDIT AND RISK

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

10.1. Update on Review of QQI ICT and Data Security

The Board noted the update on recommendations arising from the Review of ICT and Data Security carried out in Q3 2016.

The Board noted the progress to date and that the remaining projects were to be examined and progressed. It was noted that a number of the projects require significant business decisions. The Board noted that the Executive is also considering the area of Data Loss Prevention as part of its GDPR requirements. The Executive advised the Board that it can be confident in the level of security currently in place within the organisation.

The Board noted that a further update on progress will be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee.

10.2. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

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

10.3. Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 26 April 2018.

The Board noted that the Audit and Risk Committee will be presented with a revised Corporate Procurement Plan at its Meeting scheduled for 22 October 2018. The Board noted the Audit and Risk Chair's suggestion that the Corporate Procurement Policy should also be considered for updating.

11. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Board noted the update on **Strategic Planning**.

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

The Executive suggested moving the presentation on legislative amendments listed under Item 14, Relations with the Department of Education and Skills to this item as the new Legislation and proposed changes to existing and the introduction of new functions would impact significantly on the period which the new Strategy covers. The draft Amendment Bill had been circulated to the Board in August.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A Session.

The Board noted the key functions under the revised Legislation are likely to include

- The power to list Awarding Bodies for the purpose of having additional Awards included within the NFQ;
- Provide a legal basis for QQI to examine the *bona fides* and financial capacity of providers;
- The International Education Mark (IEM) and
- Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL).

Additional proposals include:

- changes to Quality Assurance procedures;
- changes to Recognition of Prior Learning;
- Award making Powers for IoTs;
- Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners;
- Fees and
- Delegated Authority, among others.

The Board noted that the draft Legislation is due to go through 2nd Stage in the Seanad in the near future. The Board noted that the Oireachtas Committee had also written to key stakeholders seeking views on the draft legislation by 5 October 2018.

11.2. Implementation Plan for QQI Strategy Statement 2019-2021

The Board noted the Strategy Statement which would be published on the QQI website shortly. The Board noted the Implementation Plan covered eight programmes of work to be delivered over the three year period and which would be overseen by the Executive Management Team and managed through the Programme Board.

The Board **approved** the Implementation Plan and thanked all those who had helped to get the Strategy to this point.

11.3. Corporate Plan 2018

The Board noted the Q2 and interim Q3 Progress Reports for the 2018 Corporate Plan.

There was a short discussion on the first two Higher Education Reviews completed which were considered by the Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC) at its meeting on 20 September.

12. GOVERNANCE

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

12.1. Self-assessment Evaluation of Committee Performance 2017

The Board noted that following publication of the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, an external review of the Board and its Committees had taken place in early 2017. QQI Committees then undertook their own self-assessment process for the first time at the beginning of 2018. The Board noted that it had taken a little longer than expected to present the outcomes to the Board due to the schedule of Committee meetings this year. The Board noted that the process

will be commencing again towards the end of the year and the Executive expects the next round of the process to be more streamlined.

The Board noted that the outcomes of one Committee (the PAOC) remains outstanding as they had yet to meet to discuss the findings from their evaluation and the report is expected to be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

13. WITHDRAWAL OF VALIDATION

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

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. The Board **approved** the withdrawal of validation from the specified providers under Section 47 of the 2012 Act.

The Board also noted that the Executive had informed all providers due for re-engagement that they should review their list of validated programmes and inform QQI of any for which validation should be withdrawn. These programmes are inactive or have been replaced with newer versions following revalidation. The Board **approved** the withdrawal of validation of the programmes specified under Section 47 of the 2012 Act.

14. RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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

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

Following the recommendation of the Executive, the presentation on Legislative amendments was delivered under item 11 above.

14.2. PDA Mid-Year Review Meeting

The Board noted that the mid-year review meeting for the 2018 Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) took place on 26 June between the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education and Skills and the Chairperson and Chief Executive of QQI.

The Board noted that the Chairperson and Chief Executive considered it a valuable meeting which provided an opportunity for the Chairperson to meet with the Secretary General. The Board noted that among the key items discussed were the upcoming legislative amendments and also noted that the resulting need for additional ICT capital had been flagged with Departmental officials. It was noted that a further meeting on resources would be arranged shortly in light of the legislative amendments and associated new functions for QQI.

The Board noted that the next PDA review meeting between senior management of DES and the EMT will take place in December to report on progress under the current PDA and to discuss the 2019 agreement.

The Board noted that the Chairperson had met separately with the Minister for Education and Skills in July.

15. ENQA REVIEW

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

The Board noted that in order to retain its membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), QQI is required to undertake an external review of its compliance against the 2015 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Areas (ESG). The next review is scheduled to take place in March 2019. The Board noted that the Executive was currently drafting its Self-assessment Report (SAR) and would be consulting with key stakeholders during September and October. It is expected that the SAR will be circulated to Board Members for their feedback in early November.

The Board noted that a short workshop for Board Members on the ENQA Review would take place after the Board Meeting.

16. 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:

Friday, 15 February

Friday, 12 April

The Board noted that the Executive would be in contact in the coming weeks with options for a further three meetings (June, September and November/December).

17. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

17.1. Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Approvals and Reviews Committee held on 24 May 2018.

17.2. Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 20 June and 19 July 2018.

17.3. Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee held on 9 March 2018.

17.4. 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 three months since the June 2018 Board Meeting and which also included Media Mentions and Current and Forthcoming Events (from 25 June to 21 September 2018).

17.5. Rolling Board Agenda 2018

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2018.

18. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, 7 December 2018** beginning at **10:00 a.m.**

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Item omitted from this note.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.