

# Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)

## Notes of meeting of 26 June 2020

Present: Barbara Brittingham (Chair); Ken Carroll; Paul Lyons; Gina Quin; Gerard Morgan; Carmel Kelly (Key Executive)

Apologies: Mary Danagher

In attendance: Michelle Gallagher (QQI)

1. **Minutes of meeting of 26 September 2019** *(PAOC/ A1-2020/1)*

The minutes of the PAOC meeting on the 26 September 2019 were AGREED.

2. **Conflict of Interest**

No Conflict of Interest were noted.

3. **Negative Decisions taken by the PAEC on Programme Validation for confirmation or referral back to the PAEC**

3.1 Validation Refusals

3.1.1 **ICD Business School**

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Digital Business, Level 8, Major Award, 240 Credits  
*(PAOC/A1-2020/3.1.1)*

The item was introduced by members of the Committee, and the issues that informed the PAEC decision were discussed. The PAEC's decision to refuse validation of this programme was considered and CONFIRMED.

4. **Oral Report of PAOC representations at PAEC meetings** *(PAOC/A1-2020/5)*

Paul Lyons represented the PAOC at the PAEC meeting of 06 February 2020.

Specific points that Paul noted:

- Efficient division of labour amongst committee members – full reading only 'by exception'.
- Totality of QQI oversight and engagement is comprehensive
- Programme-by-programme scrutiny through validation process complemented by re-engagements / institutional engagement / reviews

- Sheer volume of programmes subject to QQI processes was evident
- Evidence of ongoing engagement and re-engagement with providers to drive programme quality and protect learners
- Example of the monitoring process flagging concerns with provider – leads to engagement – another example of quality control
- Discussion around publication/records of refusals – level of detail made available publicly
- Differential role between QQI scrutiny and subsequent regulatory scrutiny
- Due to the level of ongoing engagement with QQI, there would be minimal chance that a provider would be unaware or ill-equipped to engage in the validation process.

Gerard Morgan represented the PAOC at the PAEC meeting of 11 June 2020.

Specific points that Gerard noted:

- Use of Microsoft Teams software was effective for the meeting which was well supplemented by detailed (digital) documentation and the use of online chat input during the meeting
- The meeting was very successfully chaired and the attention to detail was notable
- Level and depth of the discussions was comprehensive
- Learner's perspective was given due consideration under several of the agenda items in particular the workload of learners.
- Openness of the Committee was observed to reviewing current QQI Systems and Guidelines arising from issues raised, for example:
  - the need for a review of the Blended Learning Guidelines was discussed in the context of increased use of blended learning provision on programmes leading to QQI awards
  - The limited timeline of 6 weeks for turnaround validation responses from providers
  - The criteria for deferred decisions
- Wide background of Committee members leads to a broad discussion of issues on the agenda
- Many of the discussions involved robust challenges and clarification of detailed points
- Assigned Committee members presented on specific agenda items, this provided a useful explanation/context.

#### Suggestions

- A long agenda and large volume of material was presented and discussed, it may be useful to have a forum before meetings to discuss items prior to the meeting if needed also a small coffee/health break may be appropriate during the meeting
- Use of IT may be appropriate for some presentations
- The advantages/disadvantages and dynamics of a face to face meeting should be considered for future meetings when conditions allow
- Merit of distributing printed documentation on request prior to meeting could be considered (some members found reviewing large volumes of digital material onerous)

5. **Draft PAOC Annual Report to Board 2019** *(PAOC/A1-2020/5)*

The Key Executive introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the paper. A Member of the Board and the PAOC commented that these reports are beneficial to help the Board understand the PAOCs consideration. It was agreed that this paper will be presented to the QQI Board at one of its scheduled meetings.

6. **Draft Annual Self-Assessment Evaluation 2019** *(PAOC/A1-2020/6)*

The Key Executive introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the paper. The item was discussed. It was agreed that this paper will be presented to the QQI Board at one of its scheduled meetings.

7. **Matters Arising from the Minutes –**

**7.1 Draft guidelines for PAOC regarding how best to consider and evaluate negative decisions regarding programme validation** *(PAOC/A1-2020/7.1)*

The Key Executive introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the proposal from the Executive. The proposed guidelines were discussed. It was agreed that a more detailed summary of the history of the application and a reference document, as outlined in the paper would be beneficial for PAOC members when reviewing applications which had a negative validation outcome.

The executive will work on the draft guidelines circulated at the meeting and the application summary document and provide them to committee members with the meeting papers in advance of the next meeting of the Committee.

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1 Verbal update on changes to the programme validation process resulting from Covid-19. *(PAOC/A1-2020/8.1)*

This item was for noting. The Key Executive gave a brief verbal update on the changes to the programme validation process resulting from Covid-19 restrictions. It was explained that most of the processes are continuing as normal with the exception of the site visit, which is taking place as a virtual meeting instead of a face-to-face meeting between the panel and the provider.

As there was no other business, the meeting ended.