

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the eighty-first Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 13 June 2025 at 10:30 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present: Prof. Irene Sheridan (Chairperson)

Ms. Cliona Curley (Secretary/Interim Chief Executive)

Ms. Marianne Doyle (attended via MS Teams)

Dr. Sean Duignan

Dr. Sharon Feeney

Mr. Kevin McStravock

Ms. Anne Naughton

Ms. Maria Ward (Items 1-14)

Apologies: Mr. Blake Hodgkinson

Mr. Bryan O'Mahony

In attendance: Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)

Ms. Gráinne Mooney (Items 1-2)

Mr. Liam Butler (Item 12)

Dr. Peter Cullen (Item 14)

Dr. Anna Murphy (Item 13)

INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting.

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

1. PRESENTATION ON COMMUNICATIONS BY GRÁINNE MOONEY, SENIOR MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS, QQI

On foot of a request from the Board, a presentation on Communications was delivered by Gráinne Mooney, Senior Manager, Communications, at QQI. The presentation provided an outline of the work completed in the communications area to date in 2025 and outlined some of what is planned for the remainder of this year and into 2026. The Board noted that the Executive intends to carry out a full review of its social media platforms and is exploring initiatives in the area of thought leadership, the development of a podcast series and work linked to Ireland's hosting of the EU Presidency in late 2026. Accessibility of information is another area of focus for the Unit.

The Board noted that the Communications Unit hosts communications clinics for staff on a regular basis. The Unit had also completed some significant work on the organisation's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked Ms. Mooney for her attendance and her comprehensive presentation.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

The Board noted documents related to **Communications**.

2.1. Media Mentions

The Board noted media mentions covering the period 20 April to 28 May 2025. The Board also noted a report on QQI's Social Media statistics covering the period 8 April to 29 May 2025.

3. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board noted that no conflicts of interest were declared.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

The **Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting** held on 28 April 2025 were **confirmed** and signed.

5. NOTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

The Board **approved** the **Note of the Meeting of 28 April 2025** for publication on the QQI website.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Board noted the **Action Tracker**.

6.1. Action Tracker

The Board noted the updated Action Tracker.

The Board noted that the lease for QQI's office building at 26/27 Denzille Lane would be countersigned by the Landlord at a meeting of its Board to be held in June.

The Board noted that the Executive was awaiting the approval of the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) to revisions made to the organisation's Privacy Statement.

7. INTERIM CEO REPORT

The Board noted the **Interim CEO Report**.

7.1. Interim CEO Report

In addition to the report circulated, the Interim Chief Executive provided Members with a verbal update on a number of recent activities. The Board noted that there was an increase in Certification and Validation figures. An early draft of the analysis of QQI's recent survey on Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) had been produced and would feature later on the agenda for this meeting.

The Board noted that new interactive dashboards facilitating access to Certification data from 2014 – 2024 had been published on the QQI website and a link to same would be circulated to Board Members.

A thematic analysis of the first phase of Cinnte reviews of the independent/private higher education institutes (HEIs) had been finalised and also featured later on this meeting's agenda. The Board noted that a schedule of Quality Dialogue Meetings (QDMs) with Education and Training Boards (ETBs) was commencing on 23 June.

7.2. Craft Apprenticeships

The Board noted a verbal update provided by the Interim Chief Executive on a review of assessment processes for craft apprenticeship programmes.

8. STRATEGIC PLANNING

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

8.1. Corporate Plan 2025

The Board noted the interim progress report covering Quarter 2 of the Corporate Plan 2025.

The Board noted that, at this point, two actions were closed and significant progress had been completed on the remaining 12 actions.

The Board noted that the Executive was assessing consultation plans and other stakeholder activities scheduled for the latter part of the year to ensure that there was no overlap and to maximise the benefits. The Executive provided a brief overview of some of the key work currently underway.

The Board noted that while there are capacity challenges, the Executive was prioritising and adjusting project timelines accordingly.

8.2. Annual Report 2024

The Board noted the revised draft Annual Report presented following inclusion of feedback received at the April Board meeting.

The Board **approved** the Annual Report 2024 for submission to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science by 30 June 2025 as required by the 2012 Act.

The Board noted that the draft document would now move to the design phase ahead of its submission to the Minister.

9. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE (DFHERIS)

The Board noted a verbal update on the organisation's **Engagement with DFHERIS**.

9.1. Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA)

The Board noted that the Quarter 2 PDA Review meeting with the Department was scheduled for 19 June 2025.

9.2. Funding Model

The Board noted that there had been a number of meetings and discussions with the Department in relation to the Funding Model.

9.3. Amended Legislation Programme

TrustEd Ireland

The Board noted a verbal update on the TrustEd Ireland process. Work was continuing on processing the applications which had been received during Window 1.

The Board also noted a verbal update on the Due Diligence process.

Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP)

The Executive provided a verbal update in relation to recent developments surrounding the ILEP, the interim process which was managed by the Department of Justice (DoJ). The Board noted that the DoJ are focusing on the closure of the ILEP on foot of the progress in the TrustEd Ireland process and it had been engaging with DFHERIS on the matter.

The Board noted that the stakeholder engagement process being carried out by the Department was still ongoing.

10. GOVERNANCE

The Board noted documents related to **Governance**.

10.1. Committee Members/Appointments

The Board noted an extension of one year to 13 July 2026 to the membership of the following Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) member:

- Andrea Durnin.

10.2. External Review of the Performance of the Board and its Committees

The Board noted a verbal update provided by the Executive on the External Review of the Performance of the Board and its Committees. The Board noted that the survey phase of the review had been completed and the interview phase would be scheduled in the coming days.

The Executive confirmed that it expects to have the final report by September and in time for the Board's next meeting.

11. BOARD MEETS WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRESENT

The Board considered a number of the current matters including the corporate plan, CEO recruitment, role of the Board and key relationships with stakeholders.

12. BUDGET AND FINANCE

The Board noted documents related to **Budget and Finance**.

12.1. Management Accounts

The Board noted the Management Accounts for the four-months to 30 April 2025. The Board noted that there were no causes for concern to report.

12.2. ICT Contract Resources

The Board noted the proposals outlined and **approved**:

- the procurement of contracts for ICT contract resources for six months (July-December 2025) as outlined in the proposal submitted, in accordance with the QQI Purchasing and Procurement Policy and subject to contract and

- the purchase of hosting services for one year in MS Azure for the period July 2025-June 2026 in accordance with the QQI Purchasing and Procurement Policy, subject to contract and as outlined in the proposal submitted.

The Board also **approved** initiating the ICT Support contract procurement procedures for a three-year term for submission to e-Tenders by the end of Quarter 3, 2025. The Board noted that the current contract ends at the end of February 2026.

The Board **approved** the current spending and initiated the new contract procurement process.

12.3. Fees and Charges

The Board noted that the fees and charges for the Listed Awarding Bodies (LABs) process had been forwarded to the Minister's office for the Minister's consideration.

12.4. Outline Draft Budget 2026

The Board noted an outline draft budget for 2026.

13. AUDIT AND RISK

The Board noted documents related to **Audit and Risk**.

The Board noted a verbal update on the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee which took place in-person on 19 May 2025. The Board noted that the Committee had considered the updated Internal Audit Plan following the input of the Board at its April meeting and it had also received a demonstration of an audit recommendation tracker.

13.1 Terms of Reference

The Board noted the revised Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee. It was also noted that the ToR had been updated to reflect changes to committee membership, provision for the appointment of an external Chair and following the Covid-19 pandemic, specifications in relation to attendance at in person and virtual meetings. The Board suggested that the Committee should be reminded by the Executive from time to time of the option to avail of external expertise if required and where the budget allows for it. The Board **approved** the revised Terms of Reference.

13.2 Internal Audit Charter

The Board noted the revised Internal Audit Charter which had been updated in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. The Board **approved** the revised Internal Audit Charter.

13.3 Risk Management

The Board noted an update on Risk Management together with the updated Corporate Risk Register for May 2025. The Risk Register had been reviewed by the Executive Management Team (EMT) and was considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting of 19 May, who then recommended the Register to the Board for its consideration. The Board noted changes had been made to the risk on QQI's Funding Model.

The Board noted that there had been some additional progress on the risk relating to the loss of corporate knowledge.

The Executive expressed confidence that the risks accurately reflect the areas of work and exposure and noted that during the course of its review exercise, the EMT had identified a number of other areas with developments which the Team wished to expand on.

The Board acknowledged that when new risks are articulated, it is sobering and confirmed that the Board was comforted by the recognition, reflection and articulation by the Executive together with the development of measures and controls in response, even if all risks are not within the organisation's control.

The Board **approved** the Corporate Risk Register.

13.4 ICT Security

The Board noted an update on ICT Security at Quarter 2, 2025.

13.5 Data Protection

The Board noted a verbal update on Data Protection for the period to the end of Quarter 1, 2025.

13.6 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 28 March 2025.

14. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Board noted documents related to the **Comprehensive Policy Development Programme**.

14.1. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

The Board noted an initial draft analysis of responses received from the Executive's recent survey of provider staff and learners on GenAI. The Board noted that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have significant implications for the tertiary education sector in terms of the quality assurance of and trust in qualifications, assessments and academic integrity. The Board noted that GenAI will continue to be an area which the Executive will monitor.

15. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

15.1. Focus on the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC)

The Board noted the verbal update provided by the Interim Chairperson of the Committee.

15.2 Approvals and Reviews Committee

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Approvals and Reviews Committee held on 18 December 2024.

15.3. Programmes and Awards Executive Committee

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 10 April 2025.

15.4 Rolling Board Agenda

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2025.

16. ORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The Board noted a verbal update on **Organisation and Human Resources**.

16.1 Human Resources

The Board noted a brief verbal update provided by the Chairperson on the Chief Executive recruitment process which had been discussed by the Board during the closed session earlier in the meeting and consequential next steps and actions.

16.2 Facilities

The Board noted that work on soundproofing meeting rooms and the installation of a new heating system was expected to be completed by the end of the year, with the Executive hoping to complete the work on a floor-by-floor basis.

17. REVIEWS

The Board noted documents related to **Reviews**.

17.1. Thematic Analysis

The Board noted the Thematic Analysis of the Cinnte Review Reports of Independent and Private Higher Education Institutions and further noted that it was the first publication produced as part of a QQI pilot project using Generative AI. As part of the pilot, the analysis was carried out through two independent approaches, one using GenAI and the other compiled by a staff member as normal before a comparison of both sets of outcomes and findings took place. The Executive had found that while there had been overlaps in the findings, there had been a significant amount of work involved setting parameters for the analysis, etc. The Executive expected that greater efficiencies may occur in the next round of the pilot.

18. DRAFT BOARD AGENDA

The Board noted the **draft September 2025 Board Agenda**.

The Board noted and discussed the draft document.

19. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted the next scheduled meeting would take place on Friday, 26 September 2025.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairperson updated the Executive on two of the matters discussed during the earlier closed session. The Board had discussed ways of better integrating the Board with the organisation and one of the suggestions was the arrangement of a walkabout of the office.

The Board had also suggested that as it is approaching, in early 2026, the mid-point of its term that there may be an opportunity to hold an away day or schedule a longer meeting. It was expected that it would be a suitable opportunity to plan for the future.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their participation and contributions.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.