

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the eighty-third Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 26 September 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
- Dr. Sean Duignan
- Dr. Sharon Feeney
- Mr. Blake Hodgkinson
- Mr. Kevin McStravock
- Ms. Anne Naughton (attended via MS Teams)
- Ms. Maria Ward

Apologies: None

In attendance:

- Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
- Ms. Órla Barry (Item 1)
- Mr. Liam Butler (Item 12)

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 THE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS (NFQ) BY ÓRLA BARRY, HEAD OF QUALIFICATIONS INFORMATION AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, QQI

On foot of a request from the Board, a presentation on the Review of the National Framework of Qualifications incorporating an update on the Listed Awarding Bodies (LABs) process was delivered by Órla Barry, Head of Qualifications Information and Learning Opportunities. The Board noted that the NFQ is now 23 years old and the framework infrastructure had largely remained unchanged since its

establishment. The presentation outlined the programme of projects supporting the review which will be taking place over the next five-seven years. It was also noted that four of the eight projects have already commenced such as the redevelopment of the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ) and the review of the Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) policy.

Update on Listed Awarding Bodies

The Board was briefed on the number of applications received for the LABs process to date, together with an update on engagement with potential applicants. The Board noted that approval of the LABs fees and charges had been received from the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation on 25 September.

The presentation was followed by a questions and answers session.

The Board acknowledged the amount of work involved in the review programme.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked Ms. Barry for her presentation and confirmed that the Board looked forward to seeing the review and its developments progress over the coming years.

2. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board noted that no conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETINGS

The **Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting** held on 13 June and the incorporeal meeting held on 9-10 July 2025 were **confirmed** and signed.

4. NOTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

The Board **approved** the **Note of the Meeting of 13 June 2025** 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 updated Action Tracker.

6. INTERIM CEO REPORT

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

6.1. 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 continues to be increased activity in the programme validation area. The Board noted that the first draft of the suite of reports on the Rethinking Assessment – honours degree classifications study was expected to be circulated to institutions in late September.

External Evaluation of QQI as an Awarding Body

The Board noted that the Executive was commencing work on a review of QQI as an Awarding Body and as part of this review, an all-staff workshop was scheduled for 1 October.

Annual Quality Reports (AQRs)

The Executive confirmed that the next round of thematic analysis of AQRs would be compiled inhouse on this occasion and would be used as a further opportunity to explore the potential benefits of generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) for this process and for the organisation.

The last tranche of Education and Training Board (ETB) Annual Dialogue meetings were scheduled through October and November. The majority of the 16 visits were completed over the summer period.

The Board noted that a session for stakeholders on work integrated learning was scheduled for the week of 29 September.

7. STRATEGIC PLANNING

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

7.1. Corporate Plan 2025

The Board noted the interim progress report covering Quarter 3 of the Corporate Plan 2025.

The Board noted that the intended consultation on the Levels 5 and 6 White paper was delayed

slightly to incorporate further engagement with key stakeholders. The Executive provided a number of further updates on specific items.

The Executive confirmed that the Due Diligence and Initial Access to Validation processes were now fully open to applicants through the online portal. The Board noted that work on revising the organisation's customer charter was progressing but it had been impacted by the availability of staff over the summer period.

The Board noted that the organisation's pilot of GenAI programme MS Copilot had concluded. The pilot had involved 20 staff members and had ended with a survey of participants. The findings overall had been positive and the Executive confirmed that it had decided to proceed with opening the programme to staff who required it and Copilot will be the only AI platform available to staff for ICT security reasons.

The Executive confirmed that seven Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were working with QQI on a pilot of devolved responsibility. The Board noted that the pilot project was presented to the Project Steering Group (PSG) at its September meeting.

The Executive updated the Board on the commencement of the planning process for the Corporate Plan for 2026. It was noted that the Executive Management Team (EMT) and the Heads had met on 18 September and would meet again on 13 October to continue the planning process, with the Heads consulting with their individual units in the interim. The Board noted that the Executive intends to present an initial draft of the 2026 plan at the next meeting with the final version to be presented to the Board at its first meeting in 2026. The Executive confirmed that it had reminded colleagues to be realistic in their planning aims for the coming year, to prioritise work in light of available resources and strategic direction and to consider areas of work that need to be completed in 2026 prior to the final year of the current strategy. The Executive was conscious that the tertiary education sector will have little capacity for consultation in the latter half of 2026, due to Ireland hosting the EU Presidency.

Following a query from a Board member, the Executive confirmed that further AI training will be provided for staff and the initial expectation is that it will be tailored to specific applications

and areas, e.g. Powerpoint, GDPR, etc. It was also noted that learnings gathered during the pilot phase will be included in the organisation's AI hub.

8. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

The Board noted documents related to **Engagement with DFHERIS**.

8.1. Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA)

The Board noted that the Quarter 2 PDA Review meeting with the Department had taken place on 19 June. The Chairperson and the Interim Chief Executive had represented QQI at the meeting and provided the Board with a verbal update on the proceedings. It was noted that the organisation's ongoing funding situation had formed a significant part of the discussion at the meeting.

The Board noted that the Department, at that meeting, advised the Executive to commence the funding model options process again. The Board noted that correspondence had been received from the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation on 25 September approving the fees and charges for the LABs process and the review of QA procedures established by private/independent HEIs (Cinnte reviews).

The Board noted the PDA progress report for Quarter 2, 2025.

8.2. Amended Legislation Programme (ALP)

TrustEd Ireland

The Board noted a verbal update on progress provided by the Interim Chief Executive. The Board noted that the Executive was continuing to work through the applications received during Window 1 of the TrustEd Ireland process and a verbal update on the status of the two categories of applications was provided to the Board.

The Board was also provided with a verbal update on work undertaken by the Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC) in preparation for the upcoming consideration of TrustEd application reports. The Chairperson acknowledged the Board's appreciation of the Committee's work in this process.

The Executive provided a verbal update on the expressions of interest received for Window 2 of the TrustEd Ireland application process. It was noted that the window for submission of expressions of interest closed later on 26 September. The Executive confirmed that it was likely that further windows would open at later dates.

Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)

The Board noted that the Executive was still awaiting a conclusion to the Department's stakeholder engagement process and the arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners scheme remain unconfirmed as a result. The Executive updated the Board on the latest information in relation to the findings arising from the engagement process. The Board noted that the Interim Chief Executive, the Director of Integration and the Senior Manager, Finance, were scheduled to meet with colleagues from the Department the week of 29 September.

Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP)

The Board noted that the Department of Justice (DoJ), DFHERIS and QQI were due to meet and discuss next steps regarding the ILEP.

9. GOVERNANCE

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

9.1. Committee Members/Appointments

The Board **approved** the appointment of Rory O'Sullivan to the Approvals and Reviews Committee and an extension of two years to 25 November 2027 to the membership of Jim Murray on the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC).

The Interim Chief Executive updated the Board on the nomination of Walter Johnson as external Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. The Board **approved** the appointment and noted that Blake Hodgkinson's term as Chair and member of the Audit and Risk Committee was concluding shortly. The Chairperson expressed the Board's appreciation of the outgoing Chair, Blake Hodgkinson's, insights and work on the Audit and Risk Committee and welcomed Mr. Johnson to his new role.

The Board noted an extension of two years to 7 December 2027 to the membership of the following Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) member:

- Jim Murray.

9.2. External Review of the Board's Effectiveness

The Board noted the report of the external review of the Performance of the Board and its Committees and also noted that the Chairperson had a close-out meeting with the reviewer prior to the report being issued. The Board noted the recommendations and **approved** the report.

10. **BOARD MEETS WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRESENT**

The Board considered the performance review and discussed some of the opportunities for improvement as well as some of the current topics of interest.

11. **REVIEWS**

11.1 Focused Review – Assessment processes for Craft Apprenticeship programmes

The Board noted a verbal update provided by the Interim Chief Executive on the current status of the Section 34 (1b) Review of assessment processes for craft apprenticeship programmes. The Executive outlined progress and the associated timeline on the focused review.

The Board acknowledged the update provided.

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 seven-months to 31 July 2025. The Executive confirmed that there were no current causes for concern to report. The Board noted that the Executive will have a clearer indication of the likely year-end balance following the October Certification period.

The Board noted that the Executive expects the audit of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 to be completed by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in time for sign off at the next Board meeting.

12.2 Bad Debts

The Board **approved** the write down of bad debts as per the list provided.

12.3 Fees and Charges

The Board noted a verbal update on the LABs fees and charges, with approval for same received from the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation on 25 September together with approval for the Cinnte review fees for the private and independent HEIs.

13. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

13.1 Policies and Standards Committee

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee held on 24 February 2025.

13.2 Approvals and Reviews Committee

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Approvals and Reviews Committee held on 31 March 2025.

13.3 Programmes and Awards Executive Committee

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 5 June 2025.

13.4 Rolling Board Agenda

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

14. ORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The Board noted documents related to **Organisation and Human Resources**.

14.1 Human Resources

The Board noted an update on HR matters.

The Board noted that QQI had been successful in its Keepwell mark assessment with accreditation retained for a further two years. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, congratulated the HR unit and thanked them for their work in retaining the mark.

The Executive provided a verbal update on the latest phase of its work in the area of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

14.2 Facilities

The Board noted that the Lease for the 26-27 Denzille Lane building had been completed.

15. COMMUNICATIONS

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

15.1 Crisis Communications Plan

The Board noted that the Crisis Communications Plan was being revised on foot of the recent completion of the Disaster Recovery Business Continuity Plan.

15.2 Media Mentions

The Board noted media mentions covering the period 4 June to 15 September 2025. The Board also noted a report on QQI's Social Media statistics covering the period 31 May to 14 September 2025.

16. DRAFT BOARD AGENDA

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

The Board noted that the date of the next meeting would change and the Executive would confirm the final date shortly. The Board discussed the draft Agenda.

17. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted the next scheduled meeting would take place on *date to be confirmed*.

The Board noted and **approved** the schedule of Board meetings for 2026:

Friday, 27 February 2026

Friday, 24 April

Friday, 12 June

Monday, 28 September

Friday, 27 November.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked Cliona Curley for her work and dedication over the last six months as Interim Chief Executive and expressed its appreciation to her.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their participation and contributions.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.