Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Note of the eighty-sixth Meeting of the Authority (The Board) which took place on Friday, 24 April 2026 at 10:30 a.m. in the Boardroom, QQI Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

Present: Prof. Irene Sheridan (Chairperson)
Dr. Lynn Ramsey (Chief Executive) (attended via MS Teams)
Ms. Cliona Curley (Secretary)
Ms. Marianne Doyle (attended via MS Teams)
Dr. Sean Duignan
Dr. Sharon Feeney
Mr. Blake Hodkinson
Mr. Kevin McStravock
Ms. Emma Muldoon Ryan
Ms. Anne Naughton
Ms. Maria Ward (attended via MS Teams, Items 1-9)

Apologies: None

In attendance: Ms. Caitríona Lawless (Recording Secretary)
Mr. Liam Butler (Item 14)
Mr. Walter Johnston (Item 8)
Dr. Jim Murray (Item 7)
Dr. Alan Wall (attended via MS Teams, Item 1)

INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting.

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

1. PRESENTATION BY DR. ALAN WALL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY (HEA)

As one of the commitments contained in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between QQI and the HEA, Dr. Alan Wall, Chief Executive of the HEA, delivered a presentation to the Board. The presentation was followed by a questions and answers session.

On behalf of the Board, the Chairperson thanked Dr. Wall for his participation at the meeting and his contributions to the important ongoing relationship between the two organisations.

2. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board noted that no conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

The **Minutes of the QQI Board Meeting** held on 27 February 2026 were **confirmed** and signed.

4. NOTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

The Board **approved** the **Note of the Meeting of 27 February 2026** 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.

The Board noted that the Assistant Secretary, Higher Education – Policy Division in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science would attend the presentation slot at the June Board meeting.

6. CEO REPORT

The Board noted the **CEO Report**.

6.1 CEO Report

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on a number of key developments in addition to the circulated report.

Apprenticeships

The Board noted the progress outlined which had taken place since its last meeting on 27 February. The Board noted that the Oversight Group had met and SOLAS was making progress in implementing recommendations arising from the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

The Board noted that the Craft Transfer Plan Steering Committee, the high-level group overseeing the migration of craft apprenticeships, had met for the first time on 31 March. The group was co-chaired by DFHERIS together with a rotating alternate from QQI, HEA or SOLAS. The Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) Alliance had also been established in the intervening period.

The Board noted that the Chief Executives of QQI, the HEA and SOLAS had met with the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on 8 April.

The Board noted that the Craft Transfer Plan Steering Committee had arranged a Townhall meeting to take place on 29 April where the sector would be updated on the plan to transfer Curriculum Development, Assessment and Awarding for Craft Apprenticeships to the educational providers.

Learner Records Systems

The Chief Executive also updated the Board on issues which have arisen in a small number of institutions in relation to their respective learner records systems.

The Board noted that formal structured engagement between the Executive and the respective providers had taken place. The Board noted that the Executive intends to discuss the matter at the upcoming round of Quality Dialogue Meetings (QDMs).

The Board briefly discussed the matter. The Executive thanked Members for their insights and views and confirmed that it would gather further information on the matter at the QDMs.

European Degree Labelling

The Board noted that European Degree Labelling was being discussed at the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) meeting where the Chief Executive was in attendance. The Executive confirmed that a decision on labelling was expected at European level in June and that the Executive expects to have clearer information on the developments by the September Board meeting or the end of Quarter 3.

The discussion touched on a proposed analysis of Provider Quality Reports (PQRs) submitted by private FET providers, noting that approximately 130 reports were expected to be submitted by the end of April. The Board noted that Strategy Days would be held for the Board, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and for all staff in May. An organisational review would also take place later in the year.

National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)

The Board noted an update on the upcoming strategic review of NStEP following a request from a Board member. The Board noted that the NStEP programme had been in place for 10 years and the Executive confirmed that the review which had been expected to commence in Quarter 3, would now be deferred to Quarter 4.

7. AMENDED LEGISLATION PROGRAMME (ALP)

The Board noted a verbal update on the **Amended Legislation Programme**.

7.1 Amended Legislation Programme (ALP)

The Board noted a verbal update on the ALP and recent developments.

TrustEd Ireland

The Board noted that Window 2 for applications for the TrustEd Ireland mark had closed on 27 March. Following that closure, the Executive confirmed the number of applications received and categories of same.

An update was provided in relation to Window 1 ELE applications. The Board noted that the applications were approaching the final stage of processing and would be routed though the governance process shortly thereafter.

The Board noted that interlink of the TrustEd process and the cessation of the Interim List of Eligible Providers (ILEP) which the Department of Justice (DoJ) had implemented. The Board noted that a new transitional group had been established to work with the DoJ to progress the move from the ILEP to the TrustEd Ireland process.

8. 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 on 13 April 2026.

8.1 Focus on Audit and Risk Committee

This item appeared under item 9 on the day's agenda.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend and meet with members. The Chair outlined his background and experience. The Chair provided an update on the work carried out by the Committee in 2025 and some of the key areas focused on.

The Board noted that the Committee would continue to review and update the Corporate Risk Register for the 2026 and 2027 environments. The Chair confirmed that that the Audit and Risk Committee had met with the C&AG auditor in 2025 as recommended under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

On behalf of the Board, the Chairperson thanked Mr. Johnston and the Audit and Risk Committee for their work and the level of comfort they provide.

8.2 Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for the year ended 31 December 2025. The Board noted the proposed decoupling of the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) from the Disaster Recovery aspect of an upcoming internal audit. The Committee and external Internal Audit partners were in agreement with the request.

The Board **approved** the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2025 subject to some minor amendments.

8.3 Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted and **approved** the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee. The Executive confirmed that a more substantial review exercise would be carried out in the next iteration.

8.4 Internal Audit report– Quality Assurance (QA) Division

The Board noted the internal audit review carried out by the external Internal Audit partner. The Board **approved** the Internal Audit Report of the Quality Assurance Division.

8.5 Internal Audit Report

The Board noted the following Internal Audit Report:

- Official Languages Acts.

The Board briefly discussed the audit and organisation's obligations in this area. The Board **approved** the Internal Audit report as listed.

8.6 Risk Management

The Board noted a verbal update provided on Risk Management in addition to information provided under item 7 above.

The Board noted that the Executive was working on formulating wording for a risk on Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) for inclusion on the Corporate Risk Register which would be presented to the Board for consideration at a later date.

8.7 Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee

The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 13 February 2026.

9. BOARD MEETS WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRESENT

The Board considered some current matters including some of the emerging challenges for providers and the Agency, as well as the planned Board Strategy Day.

10. ITEMS FOR NOTING

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

10.1 Focus on Audit and Risk Committee

This item was discussed under item 8 above.

10.2 Programmes and Awards Executive Committee

The Board noted the reports of the meetings of the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee held on 27 November 2025 and 12 February 2026.

10.3 Approvals and Reviews Committee

The Board noted the report of the meeting of the Approvals and Reviews Committee held on 15 December 2025.

10.4 Rolling Board Agenda

The Board noted an update on the Rolling Board Agenda for 2026.

11. STRATEGIC PLANNING

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

11.1 Corporate Plan 2026

The Board noted a progress report covering Quarter 1 of the Corporate Plan 2026. The Board noted that the action for Quarter 1 related to the completion of Window 1 of the TrustEd Ireland process was now deferred to Quarter 2 due to the pause of the process as discussed earlier in the meeting. The Board also noted that a second action relating to the Review of NStEP had been moved to Quarter 4 as per the discussion under item 6 earlier.

11.2 Annual Report 2025

The Board noted a verbal update on the draft Annual Report for 2025. It was noted that an initial draft report would normally be presented to the Board at its April meeting each year. However, the Executive considered that further work was required on the current version and proposed to circulate the draft to members in May ahead of the Board's Strategy day. Members would be requested to return observations to the Executive prior to the end of May for incorporation into a final draft which would be presented to the Board for consideration at its next meeting scheduled for 12 June.

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

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

12.1 Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA)

The Board noted a verbal update on the Governance Liaison meeting with the Department which took place on 19 March.

The Board noted that there is also regular engagement with the Department across the organisation outside of the Governance Liaison meetings.

It was noted that the Executive had also raised the matter of Board member vacancies which will arise in Quarter 2, 2027. Members were requested to consider their intentions in relation to reappointment or otherwise.

The Board noted the Performance Delivery Agreement for 2026 and the revised Oversight Agreement 2024-2026.

13. GOVERNANCE

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

13.1 Committee Members/Appointments

The Board **approved** the appointment of Stergiani Kostopoulou to the Approvals and Reviews Committee. The Board also noted the appointment of Jennifer Osborne to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee.

14. BUDGET AND FINANCE

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

14.1 Management Accounts

The Board noted the Management Accounts for the two-months to 28 February 2026. The Board also noted that there was nothing which currently gave rise to cause for concern. The Senior Manager, Finance and Procurement, briefly outlined some areas which are likely to impact on finances over the coming months.

The Board noted that due largely to inflation, non-pay expenditure had doubled since 2019, driven in large part by increases to ICT costs. The Board and Executive reiterated the need to revisit the fee structure, particularly in relation to HE versus FET validation engagement. The Board noted that while there are lower fees in operation for FET validation, the costs incurred and the time involved are comparable to the HE validation process which has higher fees and operates closer to a cost recovery basis.

14.2 Management Letter – QQI Financial Statements 2024

The Board noted the C&AG Management Letter for the audit of the 2024 Financial Statements.

14.3 Procurement Plan 2026-2028

The Board noted the Procurement Plan which had been updated to meet the organisation's obligations under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The Board **approved** the Procurement Plan 2026-2028.

15. ORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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

15.1 Human Resources

The Board noted an update on Human Resources.

The Board noted that the organisation had been nominated in four categories for the Keepwell Mark Awards. The Board also noted that the HR unit had again organised a calendar of events and initiatives for staff, taking place from 27 April, to mark National Wellbeing week.

16. COMMUNICATIONS

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

16.1 Media Mentions

The Board noted media mentions and social media statistics covering the period 9 February – 7 April 2026.

17. DRAFT BOARD AGENDA

The Board noted the **Draft June 2026 Board Agenda**.

The Board noted that the final draft of the Annual Report for 2025 would be presented to the Board for its consideration at its meeting on 12 June. The Board requested that a recap of the discussion from the Board Strategy day be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

18. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted the next scheduled meeting would take place on Friday, 12 June 2026.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

19.1 Board Strategy Day

The Board noted a verbal update on the Board Strategy day scheduled for 26 May. The Executive outlined the speakers and facilitators involved. It was noted that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would join the Board for one of the sessions on the day. The Board requested that a draft agenda was circulated in advance to facilitate feedback from Members.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their participation and contributions.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.