

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

Wednesday, 13th March 2019

Denzille Lane, Dublin (11:am – 1:30pm)

- Present:** Anne Walsh - Committee Chair
Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Aileen Ponton - International Expert
Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert
Niamh O'Reilly - Board Member
Bryan Fields - National Expert
- In attendance:** Peter Cullen – Head of Research and Standards (QQI Key Executive for the PSC)
Paul Brady - QQI Secretary
Roisin Morris-Drennan - QQI (Item 7.1)
- Apologies:** Lucien Bollaert - International Expert
Daire Keogh - National Expert

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed all members to this Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) meeting. The Chair noted the appointment of Peter Cullen as the new QQI Key Executive. The Committee extend their best wishes to Roisin Sweeney.

1 1.1 Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

2 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 20th Meeting, 28th November 2019

The Minutes of the Meetings of the 20th Meeting, 28th November 2019, were **APPROVED** and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes

Terms of Reference

Governance Structure, Sub-Board Committee Structure Review

PSC Terms of Reference

The Committee was updated on the review of the sub-Board committee structure and that the proposed review will be deferred for 12 months. The Chair informed the Committee that an external review of the Board and its Committees was carried out in 2017 and no issues were raised with the current structure.

The committee noted the revised Terms of Reference that were approved by the Board on 7 December 2018.

4.1 Standards

4.1 Proposed Changes to Surface Supplied Diving Operations

-Explanatory Memorandum

-Surface Supplied Inshore Diving Operations

The Committee Noted the proposed standards and considered the proposal for changes. The members understood the reasons for the proposed changes and that they are supported by the original Diving Standards Development Group. The changes included adjustments to expected learning outcomes and an amendment to the award title to include 'Inshore'.

The PSC **Agreed to Adopt** the changes to award Surface Supplied Inshore Diving Operations 6S20621 and its component Surface Supplied Inshore Diving 6N20620.

5. Policy

5.1 Brexit Update

QQI Brexit Preparation

The Committee was updated on the close relationship and collaboration between QQI and the relevant bodies within the UK to ensure that although there is uncertainty, business as usual prevails at least until such time as the outcomes of Brexit become clearer. The members noted the recent annual "Five Countries" Meeting (UK and Ireland Qualifications Frameworks Group), this year hosted by QQI on 30-31 January 2019. Maintaining the current structures to ensure mobility and recognition of qualifications across borders is a priority as is the continued alignment of country qualifications to the European Quality Framework.

5.2 Amended Legislation Projects

The committee received a verbal update in relation to the current position of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018: Committee stage (Resumed). The Committee noted that the bill has not yet been passed and indeed some new issues have arisen. One issue refers to Employment rights within the English Language Education Sector and the role of QQI. Another issue brought to the attention of the Committee was that the

Government has decided to seek University title for the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland. The Members noted that the introduction of these new issues may delay the timeframe for passing of the amendments to legislation.

6. Green Papers

6.1 Green Paper on Assessment (March 2018)

The committee were briefed on the status of the Green Paper on Assessment which was presented to the Committee in November 2017 for approval for publication for consultation. The paper was subsequently published in March 2018 and consultation ended in December 2018. Focused workshops were held for both FE and HE sectors during consultation. There were about 77 written responses received in relation to the paper. The next step in the process is to carry out a thematic analysis of the feedback received and then to consider the issues and options for addressing them. The analysis of the consultation feedback and QQI's response will be presented to the committee later this year. QQI together with representatives from stakeholders of the sector will then produce a White Paper on Guidelines on Assessment.

7. White Papers

7.1 Inaugural Review of the Education and Training Boards

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Inaugural Review of the Education and Training Boards

The committee welcomed the draft White Paper 'Inaugural Review of the Education and Training Boards', noting that the sixteen ETBs have completed the re-engagement process with QQI and their quality assurance procedures were formally approved in 2018. This proposed draft white paper relates to QQI's obligations under Section 27(b) of the 2012 Act, i.e. to establish procedures for the review by QQI of the effectiveness and implementation of a provider's quality assurance procedures – in this case the inaugural quality assurance review of the ETBs. The Committee discussed the draft white paper in detail and noted the complexity of reviewing sixteen ETBs. It was highlighted that individual ETBs may be at different stages in implementing their quality assurance procedures and that a flexible approach to review may be required. The Committee recognized that the inaugural review will focus on the ETBs' overarching quality assurance systems (albeit at this developmental stage of ETB quality assurance), reflecting the ETBs' responsibility for the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance procedures. The committee also recognized the proposed Sectoral Report as an important element of the process.

The committee suggested the following amendments to the draft white paper.

1. Review the title of the white paper- Suggestion:
‘inaugural statutory review *of the effectiveness and implementation* of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) quality assurance procedures.
2. Include (in the white paper) provision for an ETB to provide feedback on how the review process worked.
3. Expand the ‘Introduction’ section of the paper to recognise the current organizational and quality assurance contexts for the ETBs.
4. Provide more clarity on the scope of the review.
5. Define ‘regional teams.

Following discussion, the PSC AGREED the draft white Paper ‘Inaugural Review of the Education and Training Boards’ for ADOPTION and PUBLICATION for CONSULTATION subject to the above recommendations.

7.2 Statutory Guidelines for the National University of Ireland (NUI) for the Review of its Linked Providers

- Explanatory Memorandum
- Statutory *Guidelines* for the National University of Ireland (NUI) for the Review of its Linked Providers

The Committee Noted that the white Paper ‘*Statutory Guidelines for the National University of Ireland (NUI) for the Review of its Linked Provider*’ was published for consultation from 17 December 2018 to 1 February 2019. The Committee noted the paper included a statement that the scope of the guidelines does not apply to constituent universities of the NUI which is in line with the PSC’s recommendation from the previous meeting in November 2018. The Committee also noted the one response to the consultation.

After discussion the PSC Agreed to Approve the final Guideline for publication.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Annual Self-Assessment Evaluation of Committee Performance

- Explanatory Memorandum
- PSC Survey Summary Report Comments
- PSC Survey Summary Report

The Executive presented a summary of the responses and this was followed by discussion on various aspects of the findings.

It was agreed that the Executive would include for the next meeting a paper mapping QQI's published Policies and Guidelines together with a plan for Green and White papers in development. This would assist the PSC in taking greater oversight of the policy development as well as approving individual policies.

The executive is to consider how it should report back to the PSC on the effectiveness of the decisions made by the PSC in relation to adoption and approval of policies and guidelines.

The Executive will brief any attending staff members in advance of PSC meetings on the working practices of the Committee.

The Executive will produce a report of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Self-Assessment Evaluation and present to the Board.

8.2 Learners' views of Accreditation and the National Framework of Qualifications

The presentation highlighted the flexibility of National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and how the NFQ enhances access, transfer and progression together with its facilitation of small qualifications that can be used as stepping stones to ease the return to formal education from those who have been away from it for some time.

The presentation also noted that Aontas hosted the third annual National FET Learner Forum event held in April 2018 and included recommendations made with respect to increasing and promoting awareness of the NFQ.

8.3 Reflections and Opportunities for the Future

The Committee members were updated on 'Reflections and Opportunities for the Future' with regard to the Modernisation of Directive 2005/36 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications – Directive 2013/55/EC. Anne-Marie noted the value of QQI liaising with occupational regulators. The Chair noted that this is the final meeting for Anne-Marie Ryan whose term ends on 19 March 2019. Anne-Marie has served on the committee since its inaugural meeting in March 2014. The Chair, on behalf of QQI and the members of the Committee, thanked Anne-Marie for her commitment and her important input into the work of the Committee to date and wished Anne-Marie the very best for the future.

8.4 New Publications since last PSC meeting

The Committee members attention was brought to the new publications from QQI since its previous meeting.

- Quality in FET 2018 Insight
- A Thematic Analysis of Reports on the Accreditation / Approval/Review of Programmes of Higher Education

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland Self-Assessment Report for ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)
- Quality within Higher Education 2018
- Schedule of Fees
- National Employers Survey 2018

Links were provided to the publications and hard copies were available at the meeting.

8.5 PSC Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 25 June 2019 and the venue has yet to be confirmed.

In closing the Chair thanked the members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their contributions and participation in the meeting.