

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

Wednesday, 4th July 2018

Emerald Cultural Institute, Dublin (10:30am – 1:00pm)

Present: Anne Walsh - Committee Chair
Niamh O'Reilly – Board Member
Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Anne Marie Ryan - National Expert
Lucien Bollaert - International Expert
Aileen Ponton - International Expert
Bryan Fields - National Expert
Daire Keogh – National Expert
Roisin Sweeney - Head of Awards Standards, QQI

In attendance: Paul Brady - QQI Secretary
Orla Lynch - QQI (Item 9.2)

Apologies: None

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed new and existing members to this Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) meeting.

The Chair acknowledged the kind co-operation of the Emerald Cultural Institute in providing a venue for the meeting. Consistent with PSC practice of holding the summer meeting off-site at an education and training provider, this was the first time an English Language Education provider hosted the meeting.

The Chair also noted the helpfulness of the organigrams which were included in the set of papers issued for this meeting. They assist in understanding the organisational structure of QQI..

0. **New Members Induction**

Three new appointments have been made to the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC). Approved at QQI's Board meeting of 27 April 2018 were Board members Dr Anne Walsh (NUI Galway) and Niamh O'Reilly (CEO Aontas). Anne was also appointed chair of the PSC by the Board. Aileen Ponton (CEO Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership) was appointed as an international expert at the Board's meeting of 23rd February 2018.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of Interest Declaration Form

Terms of Reference

Code of Practice

PSC Terms of Reference

Summary of Work Completed to date by PSC

Policy Development process

Policies adopted by the PSC March 2014 – March 2018

Awards Standards adopted by the PSC March 2014 – March 2018

Members were issued the above documents in advance of the meeting and requested to familiarise themselves with their content. The Chair emphasised the importance of the Conflict of Interest and Terms of Reference documents and drew attention to the significance of confidentiality.

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 4th of March 2018**

The Minutes of the Meetings of 4th March 2018 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

3. **Matters Arising from Minutes**

No Business

4. **Committee Members Introductions**

All members of the Committee and the supporting executive team gave a presentation which outlined a short biography and areas of interest relevant to the work of the Committee. The Chair

recognised the diverse and extensive experience available to the Committee and looked forward to future contributions from members over the duration of their tenure.

5.1 Award Standards

5.1.1 Project Updates

The review of award standards has been ongoing and has been directed into two main projects.

- **Review of Common Award System (CAS)**

The Committee was updated on the review of CAS, which is a system of linked further education and training (FET) awards specifications at National Framework of Qualifications Levels 1 to 6 inclusively. An Internal Steering Group was established to advise on the review of CAS. A project plan was approved by the Programme Board. The intention is to formulate an overall sustainable vision for CAS and to identify short term, medium term and long-term proposals for change. An External Advisory Group will also be established to gain third party views on changes to CAS. The Committee was informed that QQI is currently commissioning, in conjunction with the DES, a resource to undertake a review of childcare award standards at levels 4-6. This review will take place in the context of the broader CAS review. A Standards Review Group for childcare will be established to guide the review.

- **Levels 1 – 3**

The Committee was advised that a report on Level 1 – 3 Awards Standards Review was published in March 2018 by QQI. Discussions are currently ongoing with SOLAS in respect of joint cooperation such as the provision of a resource to support this particular activity. An external reference group will be established to guide this activity.

The executive will forward a link to QQI publication 'Policy for Determining Award Standards' to all members of the committee.

5.1.2 Inclusion of Maths for Stem

In April 2016 the PSC adopted a new standard for a level 5 Specific Purpose award in Maths for STEM (30 FE Credits). The standard was developed to satisfy demand for a programme to be provided in Further Education that would be accepted as an alternative to HC3 in Leaving Certificate mathematics by Higher Education Institutions. The Committee noted that this Special Purpose award has been incorporated as an additional elective into the structure of thirteen Level

5 major awards where mathematics is already named and where residue credit is available in the award structure.

6. Policy

No Business

7. Green Papers

No business

8. White Papers

No business

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Presentation on Further Education and Training (FET)

The Committee was presented with an overview of Further Education and Training in Ireland. The balance of FET provision in Ireland is on continuous FET rather than initial FET. A reform programme led to the establishment of the sixteen Educational Training Boards and Solas, the Further Education and Training Authority. The sector caters for diverse learner groups and provision is directed via different funding mechanisms. These are undergoing formal evaluation in terms of purpose and effectiveness. Strong links are being made between information sources, available databases and reporting requirements with a view to improving information for providers, funders and other agencies linked to achieving national targets and national strategies in FET.

9.2 Presentation on HE Bologna/Paris communique

The Committee was updated on the recent (May 2018) HE Bologna/Paris communiqué, a Ministerial conference organised in order to assess the progress made within the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) and to decide on the new steps to be taken.

The presentation informed members on the following

- Progress in implementing agreed reforms
- Unlocking the full potential of the EHEA: taking implementation forward

- Innovation in Learning and Teaching
- Beyond 2020: a more ambitious EHEA

Some of the notable issues include the role of short cycle programmes e.g. increasingly seen as a route to employment, making better use of quality assured online and blended learning and potential thematic actions supporting quality and co-operation in the EHEA.

9.3 New Publications since last PSC meeting

Explanatory Memorandum

The Committee members' attention was brought to the new QQI publications since its last meeting in March 2018. Links were provided for each publication:

- Corporate Plan 2018
- Statutory QA Guidelines for Blended Learning Programme
- HE and Apprenticeship Programme Evaluator Feedback and QQI response (Sept2016 – Nov 2017)
- Levels 1-3 Award Standards Review

9.4 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Strategy 2019-2021

The Committee was issued with the draft Statement of Strategy 2019-2021. The members noted QQI's unique position as an agency that bridges all post-secondary education and training and its central role in many of the transformative developments that have occurred in education and training in recent times. It was highlighted that this draft Strategy may be subject to change until such time as it is agreed by the Minister of Education and Skills. An implementation plan to realise the strategy will follow in due course.

9.5 Summary Feedback to Board an Annual Self-Assessment

The Committee was informed that the findings of the self-evaluation and the specific areas for future consideration will form part of the QQI Governance report on Committees of QQI to be presented to a future Board meeting.

9.6 PSC Meeting Schedule:

The dates for the forthcoming meetings were noted:

27th September 2018

28th November 2018

Proposed meeting for 2019 on 12th / 13th March (to be confirmed)

10. Any Other Business

10.1 English Language Education

The members were updated on the increase in numbers of international English Language students now studying in Ireland. The Department of Education and Skills publication '*Irish Educated Globally Connected*' – *An international education strategy for Ireland 2016-2020*' was circulated to members. The strategy is part of the wider diplomatic and trade strategy for the international positioning of Ireland.

The continued growth in the English Language Training (ELT) sector over the last five years has led to nearly 130,000 students, with the largest growth in junior students (under seventeen). There are now international students from over 118 countries choosing Ireland as the location to study English. It was noted that currently there is no QQI statutory relationship with the sector. QQI has developed standards for foundation English language programmes which can form part of a quality assured relationship with providers.

ELE providers are currently limited to a legacy relationship with Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services (ACELS). Amended legislation, hopefully to be published by the end of the summer, will allow for statutory regulation of the sector and permit ELE providers apply for the International Education Mark IEM).

Mauro Biondi, Managing Director of Emerald Cultural Institute, gave a short presentation on the Institute's history over the last twenty-five years and of its current activities in providing quality language, professional development and cultural programmes to groups and individuals of all ages from more than eighty countries.

In closing, the Chair thanked the members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their contributions and participation in the meeting. The Chair also thanked Emerald Cultural Institute for their hospitality and for hosting this meeting.