

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 13 AUGUST 2008**

Minutes of the fiftieth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10 am on Wednesday 2 July 2008 in Esk/Forth, the Optima Building, Glasgow.

**Members**

- \* Mr J McCormick (Chairman)
- \* Dr J Brown
- \* Mr A Cassidy
- \* Mrs J Gillespie
- Prof A MacLennan
- \* Mrs L McKay
- \* Mr J Mitchell
- \* Mrs M Nicol
- \* Mr G Rodgers
- Prof J Simmons

\* indicates present

**Officers**

- \* Ms M Cahill
- \* Ms K McCallum
- \* Mr J McDonald
- \* Ms J Ross
- \* Dr G Stewart
- Mr R Sylvester
- Mr J Young

**Observers**

- Ms C Carlin, Scottish Government
- Mr J MacDougall, Scottish Government

**In attendance**

- Ms K Dinwoodie, SQA

50/1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Prof A MacLennan, Prof J Simmons, Mr R Sylvester and Mr J Young. It was noted that Mr Rodgers would be arriving late.

Mr Jamie MacDougall, from the Qualifications, Assessment & Skills Division, Schools Directorate, Scottish Government and Ms K Dinwoodie, Business Manager for Finance and Corporate Governance, SQA were welcomed to the meeting.

Ms Carlin provided an update on staff changes within the Schools Directorate, advising that she would be moving to Perth and Kinross Council on secondment as Head of Change and Improvement. The Board expressed their good wishes in her new role.

From the end of July, Liz Hunter would head a new Directorate with responsibility for tackling Poverty, Equalities and Sport including the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. Her successor, Colin MacLean, would take up post on 28 July 2008.

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

50/2 **PREVIOUS MEETING**

i **Minutes of meeting held on 2 July 2008**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

ii **Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

## 50/3 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

### 49/8 ii **Draft Annual Review 2007-08**

Download activity had reported 655 hits to the webpage, with 58 downloads of the Review.

### 49/9 iii **ICC Committee held on 7 May – Trading Subsidiary**

Mr MacDougall reported that the business case submission was in draft form and would be sent to Government economists for comment before presentation to the Minister. Board members would be kept informed of progress.

## 50/4 **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

### *Board appointments*

The advertisement for the Chair would be published that week in the TESS and national press. The closing date for applications was 16 August, with interviews scheduled to take place during the first week of September.

Ministerial approval was pending on the appointment of two new Board members and meantime, candidates would be contacted with apologies for the delay in decision.

### *Edexcel Scanning Farm*

The Chairman and Mrs Gillespie had recently visited the scanning farm in Hellaby. It had been a valuable and interesting visit, and offered a good overview of the benefits and implications of electronic marking.

Comments included discussion around marker recruitment and the implications of a standardised approach to marking. The Board was assured that any decision on the way forward would safeguard the quality assurance of assessment methods.

It was agreed that officers would combine the lessons learned from this visit with the evaluation of SQA's pilots to determine the most appropriate and correct way forward. An update would be provided at a future meeting of the Board.

## 50/5 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Dr Brown presented an overview of the headline issues since the last meeting of the Board. Further to the contents of the report, she reported:

### *Continuous Improvement*

Good progress was being seen across the organisation, with more efficient and robust processes already in place. Current work involved the implementation of staffing structures for the new business areas, with a number of business function moves scheduled to take place in the Qualifications Development and Business Development directorates between October 2008 and January 2009.

## ***Engagements***

A two day visit to UHI had proven to be very positive. UHI utilised SQA HNs as the first two years of its degree programmes, and follow up discussions were being scheduled to cover detailed feedback. The opportunity for progression in Skills for Work programmes and their applicability in the Highlands area was also discussed. Continued engagement would ensure that the outcomes of the visit were taken forward.

SQA continued to conduct a considerable amount of work with the World Bank Institute and, following the British Council Dinner, SQA had been invited to attend a training session being held in October that would focus on the Scottish approach to training and education.

## 50/6 **REPORT FROM CERTIFICATION PLANNING GROUP**

Ms McCallum reported that Grade Boundary meetings were in progress, and had proven to be extremely useful, enabling wider discussion with Principal Assessors and Qualifications Managers.

In terms of Diet activity, and drawing on the work of the continuous improvement programme, she was pleased to report that the Research and Information Services teams had noticed a marked improvement in the throughput of data from the Operations Directorate.

Providing an update on the work of the CPG towards certification in August 2008, she added further comment on the main items reviewed:

### ***Results Processing System (RP)***

The RP downtime had not been cause for concern and was not atypical given the intense level of data processing activity at that time of year.

### ***Script Security***

Ms McCallum reported on a recent incident at an external central marking event and assured the Board that all scripts had been accounted for and no candidates had been placed at a disadvantage. A meeting had been convened with the General Manager and a review of arrangements for 2009 would be part of the 2008 "Lessons Learned" exercise.

### ***MySQA***

The number of candidates registered was reported at just fewer than 23,500, with the closure date for registration scheduled for 17 July. A series of emails had been sent to candidates to remind them of the need to activate their accounts by 25 July.

Work on online access continued, and a number of key milestones including all security, load and operability testing would be completed by mid-July. Work was one week behind schedule and consideration was being given to issuing results only by text and email on 5 August, and to launch the full MySQA service in the autumn. A final decision would be taken at the end of July.

### ***Electronic Marks Capture***

SQA Officers and Appointees had provided constructive feedback on the pilot and a full evaluation of all aspects of the year's EMC would be undertaken in advance of finalising plans for 2009.

While it was expected that the use of Marking From Paper would continue, it was agreed that a measured approach would be taken to the furtherance of Marking from Image and plans for a non-live pilot of the SCOIS software was planned for October 2009.

### ***Timetabling***

Further refinements had been applied to the timetabling schedule for 2009, with a 35% reduction in episodes of coincident examinations. A full consultation would be undertaken for the 2010 timetable.

### ***Grade Boundary Meetings***

#### Standard Grade Maths

It was clarified that the media coverage had been inaccurate in reporting that some parts of the examination assessed content areas not covered by the syllabus. The Board was assured that all questions were from the Standard Grade syllabus.

#### Higher English

The Board was given a detailed report on the issues discussed at the Grade Boundary Meeting and the decisions reached. The Board was confident in the outcome and expressed its confidence in the robust and rigorous processes in place to support the course of action taken. It was noted that a longer term review of Higher English had been initiated.

## 50/7 ***CURRICULUM for EXCELLENCE***

Mr Rodgers joined the meeting.

Dr Stewart provided an update on recent work around CfE, advising that the consultation on the future of national qualifications and Building the Curriculum 3 had been launched on 10 June. A special meeting of the Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee had convened on 20 June to discuss the implications for SQA and Scotland's qualifications. A note of the key points arising from this meeting was circulated to the Board for information.

Drawing on the comments of that joint meeting, Dr Stewart went on to outline the proposals of the consultation document, highlighting areas of consideration for SQA. A detailed response to the Government's Consultation would be drafted for consideration and review by the Board before submission.

The proposed timetable for introduction suggested that the new curriculum should commence in 2009/10, with new and revised qualifications available from 2012/13. In preparation for this, SQA would need to:

- Ascertain the readiness of Local Authorities to adopt the new curriculum in 2009/10 for S1. .
- Formulate timelines and information required for software developments with external suppliers.
- Establish and manage stakeholder expectation for implementation plans.

Dr Stewart tabled the latest iteration of the high level outline plan with milestones, dependencies and resource requirements to be developed as part of CfE. Initial discussions had taken place with the Scottish Government around the requirement for a CfE

Qualifications Development Team to drive forward the development of new qualifications. A further meeting with the government was scheduled for 16 July.

Outlining the tasks of the plan, it was noted that further work was underway to identify the implications of the proposals on income and expenditure. Current concerns focused on appointee recruitment and the complexities of dual running. It was noted that a Programme Board, chaired by Mr Sylvester, had been put in place to manage all projects across SQA, ensuring that business area interdependencies were identified, reviewed and monitored.

It was agreed that CfE would become a significant component of each Board meeting in the future and that informed discussion would be facilitated through updates on the planning work as part of the high level outline plan.

## 50/8 **FINANCE AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

### i **Outputs from Strategic Risk Workshop**

Following on from the workshop in May, Ms Dinwoodie invited the Board to comment on the draft SQA strategic goals and their links to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.

After discussion, it was agreed to develop:

- the consequences associated with the draft strategic risks,
- initial draft performance measures; and
- a timetable for the remainder of the corporate planning cycle.

A revised draft would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board.

## 50/9 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### i **Accreditation Committee – 27 May 2008**

In the absence of Professor Simmons, Dr Brown outlined the business of the policy meeting held on 27 May, in particular highlighting the work around the proposal to delegate credit rating status to suitable awarding bodies. The Board noted the minutes.

### ii **Advisory Council held on 12 May 2008**

The business of the meeting had been reported to the last meeting of the Board, and the minutes were noted.

### iii **Audit and Performance Committee held on 30 April 2008**

The business of the meeting had been reported to the last meeting of the Board, and the minutes were noted.

### iv **International and Commercial Committee held on 7 May 2008**

The business of the meeting had been reported to the last meeting of the Board, and the minutes were noted.

50/10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no matters raised for discussion.

**PAPERS FOR NOTING**

The Board noted the contents of the following reports:

**PFN 1** Financial Report to 31 May 2008

50/11 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Management would be held on Wednesday 13 August the Boardroom, Ironmills Road, Dalkeith.