

## SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

### SQA/COLLEGE OPERATIONAL FORUM – 24 June 2009

Minutes of the eighth meeting of the SQA/College Operational Forum held at 1.30 pm on Wednesday 24 June 2009 in SQA Office, Almond/Clyde, The Optima Building, Glasgow.

<b>SQA</b>	<b>Colleges</b>	<b>In attendance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Karen McCallum (KMcC) [Convenor]</li> <li>* Martin Hughes (MNH)</li> <li>* Jim Ballantyne (JYB)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ian Allison, Carnegie College (IA)</li> <li>* Ian Beach, D&amp;G College/ QI Forum (IB)</li> <li>* Isobel Campbell, UHI Millennium Institute (IC)</li> <li>Brian Casey, Motherwell College (BC/M)</li> <li>* Fiona Gunn, Stevenson College (FG)</li> <li>* Gordon Jenkins, Kilmarnock College (GJ)</li> <li>* Michael Lofthouse Stow College (ML)</li> <li>Robert McIlwaine, Ayr College, Chair MIS CoP (RMc)</li> <li>* Lynne McNulty, James Watt College, (LMcN)</li> <li>* Jane Polglase, ASC (JP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Helen Bennett, SQA (HB) [8/4]</li> <li>* Jean Blair, SQA (JB) [8/8 only]</li> <li>* Alasdair MacRae (AMacR) (8/5 only)</li> <li>* Anne Andrew (AA) (8/7 only)</li> <li>* Jacqui Murray, SQA (JM) [8/10 only]</li> <li>* Allan Cowen, Ayr College (AC)</li> <li>* Phyllis Miller, SQA</li> </ul>
<b>Software Suppliers</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brian Chivers, CAPITA (BC)</li> <li>* Adrian Kilburn, CAPITA (AK)</li> <li>* Margaret Park, Tribal Technologies (MP)</li> </ul>		
* indicates present		

Ref	Agenda title	Summary of discussions
8/1	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<p>KMcC welcomed existing and new members to the eighth meeting of the SQA/College Operational Forum.</p> <p>Apologies were received from BC, RMc and IA. Allan Cowan was attending the meeting on behalf of RMc and to report on item 8/9.</p> <p>As IA has indicated that he has temporarily left the College Sector, another college representative will be invited to attend future meetings.</p>

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8/2	<b>Minutes of previous meeting and actions</b>	The minutes and action grid from the seventh meeting held on 4 February 2009 were approved as accurate records.
8/3	<b>Matters arising</b>	None
8/4	<b>Software Supplier - Update</b>	AK reported that a number of planning meetings had taken place in which milestones had been identified for assessment and transaction IDs. It was confirmed that the product codes for Baccalaureates were now available. System reports were being reviewed to identify reports were being used and information on data flows between sites. Work was continuing on identifying individual country codes and, by the end of 2009, software suppliers will be given the opportunity to put forward suggestions with input from colleges on possible formats. IC asked if country codes would match postcodes and AK responded that country codes shall be mapped with more than one code per country. MNH added that SQA use words as opposed to system codes and will investigate ways of standardising both lists.
8/5	<b>Communication</b>	<p>AMacR introduced himself as SQA's new Head of Business Development and Customer Support. He has responsibility for SQA's team of Business Development Managers (BDMs) and is keen to obtain feedback from colleges on the BDMs' new role and potential benefits of the change from Customer Service Managers (CSMs). He emphasised that their role was to continue to ensure that service levels were maintained and that BDM visits should be to our mutual benefit. Their role is also to raise awareness of products and services, help to grow each centre's business and shape new products and services to suit college needs.</p> <p>FG pointed out that she had not seen a BDM or CSM for over two years and had no idea who should be visiting her college. AMacR informed everyone of a link to the SQA website <a href="http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/35166.html">www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/35166.html</a> for information on the new BDM contacts and the initial point of contact by region.</p> <p>BC commented that the website is not easy to use to find information. KMcC informed the group that work was being undertaken by the SQA web team to streamline the website with families of products and relevant topics</p>

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		<p>being grouped together. FG informed the group of testing the online survey (Bunnyfoot) not being completed and therefore not being disseminated in time for colleges to complete their surveys by the end of the month. MNH nevertheless asked that colleges try to let us know what does or doesn't work on the website so that any necessary remedial action can be taken.</p> <p>ML asked if the new communications strategy is based on being proactive or reactive. AMacR replied that it is proactive and that we are looking forward to working in conjunction/partnership with colleges and also enhance the way that BDMs engage with centres as we seek wider contact with colleges which will be to our mutual benefit. BC suggested that SQA should look at the structure of communications and visits and overall, how we communicate. There was a need to embed communication across curriculum areas and build relationships across all levels. AMacR replied that meetings with college Principals had been identified as a starting point with initial communication being made at the earliest stages of developments. BC suggested that communication needs to be at "grass roots" level extending outwards and then upwards if it is to succeed as these are the people who deal with the day-to-day issues. FG mentioned the competitive market in which we were operating for many products and that SQA should be the Awarding Body of choice because of its ability to offer better service and quality. JP indicated that it was difficult to obtain statistics on trends, age cohorts and geographical area to help determine future college provision. AMacR replied that there is a new business intelligence team who will prepare this kind of information for development purposes.</p>
8/6	<b>Curriculum for Excellence</b>	<p>JA provided an update on the Curriculum for Excellence. New National Qualifications containing 160 hours classroom time at levels SCQF levels 4 and 5 would replace Standard Grade. Level 4 qualifications would be internally assessed but Level 5 qualifications would follow the more conventional assessment route with coursework being internally assessed with an external assessment graded A to C and possibly D. Access qualifications would continue to be available. Literacy and Numeracy qualifications would be introduced at SCQF levels 3, 4, and 5. These would not be graded and portfolios of evidence would be submitted to SQA for marking.</p> <p>BC asked what the syllabus would look like. JA replied that this was at the development stage and that some people from the Further Education Sector had been recruited into the development team and were involved in development and syllabus writing. We require more college staff to participate in qualification development teams. JP indicated that there was good feedback from the FE sector regarding involvement in the CfE process. JA expanded the idea that CfE should be seen as an opportunity for progression. New NC/NPAs could be used to book a place at college by gaining part of the qualification at school then completing the</p>

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		<p>remainder at college. At Forth Valley college, the Baccalaureate's interdisciplinary project was being undertaken by sixty nine candidates and this may also lead to further uptake of HN Units. JP raised a concern that interdisciplinary project, if allowed to take up the same time as a full Higher, could result in issues for timetabling. Nevertheless, JA felt that there were benefits for the college sector to become more involved in the new qualifications. In conclusion, he said that a new team led by Roddy Gillespie had been set up within SQA to focus on the development of the new NQ qualifications which will avoid any impact on other essential work during the development.</p>
8/7	<p><b>Introducing Appointee Management</b></p>	<p>AA joined the meeting to provide a presentation on the new Appointee Management team within SQA. The new team had been set up following Continuous Improvement activities which identified the need for better ways of appointing, training and utilising appointees.</p> <p>As a result, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improved our processes, systems and communications with appointees and as a result, we aim to attract trained high performers with opportunities for progression</li> <li>- identified the need for a new fee structure that will be cost neutral, selection criteria, contract details, KPMs for appointees that will be rolled out over the next year.</li> <li>- started developing a portal facility with PIN and input details to provide access to all scheduled dates for meetings with the intention of reducing the number of letters being sent to each appointee.</li> </ul> <p>Appointee Management vacancies and promotions will be advertised by October 2009. MP confirmed that this was a positive development as from personal experience, she was aware of an appointee receiving three letters on the same day for three different events. AA reiterated that there should be less likelihood of this happening in future with development support staff reporting to Appointee Management. ML queried whether standardisation of fees could be seen as a disincentive resulting in possible loss of appointees and greater risk. AA suggested that the current system was inherently unfair as it allowed two individuals doing similar roles to be paid differently. Business areas have been made aware of the subject areas likely to be affected. It was agreed that a copy of the Powerpoint presentation will be made available.</p>
8/8	<p><b>Quality Focus Group</b></p>	<p>JB joined the meeting to provide a verbal report on the work of the Quality Focus Group. SQA seeks broader liaison with college sector resulting in the setting up of a Quality Focus Group and a series of sub-groups to look at quality issues, how to progress these and how to communicate key milestones. Issues currently under</p>

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		<p>consideration are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sharing of good practice – from external verification. Ideas/outcomes will inform Senior EV update</li> <li>▪ Centre Profiling (MNH) – interactive project of data exchange. Pilot over summer 2009 (1 centre) with plans to rollout during next session</li> <li>▪ E-assessment (Martin Ware) – investigating a theme for taking forward QA for all new work to complement teaching and learning to enhance good QA across centres</li> </ul> <p>The report was well received and resulted in a number of questions. FG asked if SQA intended to return to Quality Auditing? JB responded that consultation with colleges had shown that existing auditing arrangements were perceived to add little value. SQA wanted to maintain/build on good aspects from Quality Audits/Desk Research audits but move on from quality control to quality enhancement. JP commented that we all need to understand how centres work and use this to inform future discussions. JB said that change requires understanding of how we currently undertake QA and identify the impact any changes will have for future decision and delivery. AC asked if there was any consultation with MIS CoP regarding the three sub-groups and what timescales are involved? MNH confirmed that Kenny Wilson (JEVC), Robert McIlwaine (chair of MIS CoP and Working Group) are involved. ML sought information on how the groups are integrated and communicate. JB said that she was working on this and offered to provide a diagram of this at the next meeting. Basically they integrate to inform/provide information and tap into Scottish College website as means of communicating outwards. However, we need to identify which groups are reading the communication. KMcC felt that communication has been poor and this group can look at ways of improving communication. BC suggested that there are many CoPs covering a wide range of subjects which could be used for informing this group. On further developments, JB said that a centre profiling system was being developed and details would be shared following evaluation of a pilot. Information will be displayed on an Excel spreadsheet with dashboard and data hidden behind it. This is currently being tested by JEVC to decide what is/isn't useful. The aim is to roll this out to all colleges by end of October. By the end of November/early December QEMs will contact colleges. By 2010 a more refined version will be available taking account of feedback received.</p>
8/9	<b>MIS Steering Group Update</b>	AC provided a verbal report on the MIS CoP meeting that took place on 10 June 2009 mentioning that a presentation had been provided on invoicing.

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8/10	<b>MySQA - Update</b>	JM reported that 39 college roadshows had been held resulting in very positive feedback from staff and students. Non-NQ students using MySQA for the first time may have been doing so to provide evidence of their qualifications to colleges or prospective employers while waiting for replacement certificates to be issued. JM asked colleges to continue to promote MySQA along with closing dates for sign-up and activation to enable students to access their results in this way. A copy of the slides will be made available to delegates.
7/13	<b>AOB</b>	It was agreed that future meeting dates would be advised after the dates of MIS CoP had been confirmed. Ideally the SQA/College Operational Forum should take place two weeks after the MIS CoP to allow a report on this to be included at each meeting.
7/14	<b>Dates for next and future meetings</b>	Wednesday 28 October 2009. Wednesday 27 January 2010. Wednesday 2 June 2010.