

Minutes of the one hundred and second meeting of the Board of Management held at 10 am on Wednesday 18 May 2016 in Esk/Forth, Optima.

Members

- * Mr G Houston (Chairman)
- * Dr J Brown (Chief Executive)
- * Mr J Edgar
- * Mr K McKay
- * Mr R O'Hare
- * Mr R Stewart
- * Dr P Thomson
- * Mrs S Walsh
- * Ms C Wilkinson

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- * Ms M Cahill
- * Mr S Davidson
- * Ms L Ellison
- * Mr J McMorris
- * Ms J Ross
- * Dr G Stewart

- * indicates present

Observers

- * Mr M McVicar, Scottish Government

102/1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, including Mr McVicar, National Qualifications Team Leader, Scottish Government. There were no apologies to record.

102/2 **DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no other conflicts of interest raised.

102/3 **PREVIOUS MEETING**

i **Minutes of meeting held on 23 March 2016**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

ii **Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

iii **Workplan**

The contents of the workplan were noted.

102/4 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

102/5 **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman advised that applications for the Board appointment vacancies had been received and shortlisted. Interview dates had been scheduled to take place during the first weeks of June. Given the confidentiality of applications, the gender balance was unknown at this stage.

Other engagements had included a meeting with Ms F Robertson, Director for Learning, where discussion had again reflected the strong and robust working relationship in place between the Scottish Government and SQA. The Chairman along with a number of other Board members and the Executive had attended a one day NDPB Governance Development event.

Finally, and along with the Chief Executive, the Chairman had met with the Chair and Chief Executive of Qualifications Wales to discuss its new approach to regulation.

The Board noted the update.

102/6 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The Board was presented with an update on recent activity with Unite and its written notice to terminate the Partnership Agreement on 30 September 2016. The Board noted with regret that Unite was withdrawing from the Partnership Agreement, nonetheless members were comfortable with the actions being taken by the SQA Executive and fully encouraged the approach to promote ongoing dialogue. After discussion, the Board was content that the matter raised no negative impact on the overall operations of SQA. At this opportunity, the Board and executive discussed their ongoing concern over staff welfare under continuing workload pressures.

The Chief Executive then presented a full update on her activities since the last meeting of the Board.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

102/7 **NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

i **CfE Programme Update**

Dr Stewart presented the CfE Update and reported that the overall programme status remained at amber due to the ongoing and conflicting demands being placed on SQA staff and Appointee resource. This related particularly to the acceleration of planned NQ product revision arising from the evidence gathered by SQA and presented to the Assessment and National Qualification Working Group and the CfE Management Board. These activities were currently being scoped and a resource requirement would be submitted to the Scottish Government in due course.

Beyond delivery of the Diet, a considerable amount of work had been dedicated to a programme of evaluation of the National Qualifications. This extensive research had taken on board the experiences and insights of practitioners and pupils across all subjects in Scotland. From the evidence gathered, SQA had recently published 51 Subject Review Reports outlining high level findings along with series of actions to address the issues raised. The Fieldwork Study and Thematic Review work were two further pieces of significant research that had been undertaken, the findings of which would be published alongside the publication of the Assessment and National Qualifications Report - the date for which had yet to be confirmed.

Aside from SQA's action plan, the research had highlighted a range of factors and broader issues across the education system that contributed to over assessment and workload pressures being experienced by young people and

teachers alike. It was noted that Education Scotland would work with SQA to expand teacher support to address broader assessment issues.

The Board entered into a long and detailed discussion, during which the following was debated and agreed:

- The Scottish Government should develop a clear communications plan to support the publication and recommendations of the ANQ Report.
- Particular attention was paid to the recent announcement by EIS confirming its move to a statutory industrial action ballot in relation to workload pressures “generated by SQA”.
- The Board discussed the need to address the wider systemic issues associated with delivery of the qualifications. It stressed the importance for the ANQ Group to clearly specify the expectations and deliverables of all parts of the system, and to ensure active engagement across this piece. It was the Board’s view that a strategic solution must be developed and communicated.
- The Board acknowledged once again the staff workload pressures impact on morale.
- The Board expressed the importance of publishing SQA’s research reports. The Fieldwork report in particular articulated the concerns that had been raised by practitioners and young people. The Board felt that it was important to share this information, given that it could impact on assessment during the next session and so could be invaluable to teaching staff as of now. In order to alleviate the impact of any change and to maintain the credibility of the qualifications, it was important for SQA to publish the research reports immediately. Any impact of not doing so could have serious repercussions.

Having rehearsed its concerns, the Board agreed that it had a duty to act with transparency and would write collectively to the First Minister outlining its view of the importance of publication. The communication should clearly set out the issues in hand, clarify any potential consequences, and outline a suggested solution.

Later: Following confirmation of the new administration, and shortly after the Board meeting, the Chairman and Chief Executive met with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. Out of committee, the Board agreed that a written communication was no longer required.

ii **Report from the Certification Programme Group**

Ms Blair presented a full update on the Certification Programme Group (CPG) report, and expanded on the particular factor reported at amber status.

The Board was provided with a summary of the challenges being faced as a result of the new travel and events contract that had been put in place by Scottish Government. It was noted that the volume of domestic accommodation requests could not be supported by the approved supplier and management of that had been brought in-house. Enquiries were also being made to seek a new supplier for international travel.

The Board noted the contents of the report, and that the mid-term Lessons Learned exercise had now commenced.

102/8 **FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Mrs Ellison, Director of Finance tabled and presented the financial performance for the full year ending 31 March 2016, as measured against the Quarter 3 forecast.

The Board noted the contents of the report and that the target forecast at Quarter 0 still applied, with a predicted full year additional grant requirement of £4.9m.

QUARTER 0 FORECAST UPDATE 2016-17

Mrs Ellison also tabled and presented the Quarter 0 forecast update for 2016-17 that reflected the recent submissions from the business and the shift of Curriculum for Excellence activity into business as usual.

It was noted that the timing of capital/project spend had been brought forward, in particular in relation to the implement of Microsoft Office. This project was critical to avoid additional costs and to protect the fragility of SQA's business critical systems. Discussions were underway with the Scottish Government on Spend to Save opportunities, with the aim of securing funding to manage the spike in planned spend.

The Board noted the current forecast position and issues identified.

102/9 **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Mr McMorris, Director of Business Development provided the Board with a full and comprehensive update on the performance of business development in all key markets for the year end position.

The report would be covered in detail as part of the later strategy session.

102/10 **BUSINESS SYSTEMS REPORT**

Mr Davidson, Director of Business Systems, presented the report on the business of the directorate. All activities were on track.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

102/11 **SQA CHANGE PROGRAMME**

Mr Davidson, Director of Business Systems, presented a summary of the work and projects underway as part of the SQA Change Programme.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

102/12 **CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

Ms Cahill presented the current status of the Corporate Risk Register.

The Board noted the contents and the recent updates by the Executive to reflect current and critical issues.

102/13 COMMITTEE REPORTS

i **Qualifications Committee –24 February 2016**

Mrs Walsh had referred to the business of the meeting at the last meeting of the Board, and members now noted the approved minutes.

ii **Qualifications Committee- 4 May 2016**

Mrs Walsh advised of the business covered. The minutes would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

iii **Audit Committee – 29 February 2016**

Mr Edgar had referred to the business of the meeting at the last meeting of the Board, and members now noted the draft minutes.

iv **International & Commercial Committee – 29 February 2016**

Mr O'Hare had referred to the business of the meeting at the last meeting of the Board, and members now noted the draft minutes.

v **Advisory Council – 20 April 2016**

Dr Thomson was pleased to report on the appointment of two new members, Ms Kordiak, Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), and Mrs McRoberts, Head Teacher. At the meeting, members had considered the Annual Summary of work (included as a paper for noting in that day's Board papers). The meeting had focussed on the legislative and regulatory environment in which SQA operated.

The minutes would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

vi **Accreditation Committee – 29 March 2016**

Ms Wilkinson outlined the main areas of business covered and the Board noted the draft minutes.

102/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no matters raised.

102/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 29 June, in Optima.

PAPER FOR NOTING

The Board noted with interest the Annual Summary of the Advisory Council's work, which had also been issued to the Scottish Government.

Following a short lunch break, the Board reconvened for an afternoon strategy session.