SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY   **B106/3 i**

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 6 DECEMBER 2016   **For approval**

Minutes of the one hundred and fifth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10 am on Monday 31 October 2016 in Esk / Forth, Optima.

	Members		**Officers**
*	Mr G Houston (Chairman)	*	Ms J Blair
	Dr J Brown (Chief Executive)	*	Ms M Cahill
*	Ms E Craig	*	Mr S Davidson
*	Mr S Hagney	*	Ms L Ellison
*	Mrs J Handley	*	Mr J McMorris
*	Dr W Mayne	*	Ms J Ross
*	Mr H McKay	*	Dr G Stewart
	Mr R O'Hare		
	Mr R Stewart		**In attendance** – item B105/11 iii only
*	Dr P Thomson		Mr N MacGowan, Head of Operations and CSR
*	Ms C Wilkinson		Mr L Priest, Manager, Operations
*	indicates present		

105/1   **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, and was delighted to introduce SQA's final new Board member, Ms Eleanor Craig. Apologies were received from Dr Brown, Mr O'Hare and Mr Stewart. No one was in attendance from the Scottish Government.

105/2   **DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no other conflicts of interest raised.

105/3   **PREVIOUS MEETING**

i   **Minutes of meeting held on 17 August 2016**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

ii   **Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

iii   **Workplan**

The Chairman drew reference to a number of amendments to the workplan, including:

▪   The deferral of the discussion around Accreditation and Regulation to December, in order to accommodate Board consideration of the Revised National Qualifications that day.
▪   An addition to the December agenda for discussion around the Scottish Education Governance Review.

These changes and the contents of the workplan were noted.

105/4 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

105/5 **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman updated the Board on his recent SQA engagements that had included filming for both the Annual Review and the Operations conference event, and hosting the Long Service Awards in the previous week. The Chairman had also had his regular meeting with Fiona Robertson, Director of Learning, Scottish Government.

It was noted that the SQA Chair vacancy had been advertised on 14 October, with a closing date set for Friday, 4 November. Interview dates had been pencilled in for the end of November.

The Board noted the update.

105/6 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

In the absence of the Chief Executive, the Board noted the report as presented.

105/7 **SQA CHANGE PROGRAMME**

Mr Davidson, Director of Business Systems, led on a presentation to the Board. For the benefit of the new Board members, he touched on the background and reasons for the Change Programme (CP), and then provided an overview of the scope of the programme and its associated workstreams.

In summary, the programme had been created to manage and monitor all change activity within SQA. The CP would support SQA as it continued to improve as an organisation and ensure that it had processes and procedures that were robust, flexible and scalable, and improve the user and customer experience. The work would be delivered through a single change programme, supported by strong programme management, and governed by a single Programme Board.

It was noted that with the closing of CfE reporting, the pending new programme of work – Revised National Qualifications (RNQ) – would also be managed through the CP.

In the course of discussion the Board:

▪ highlighted that it was crucial to have change management expertise in place to support each of the workstreams;
▪ supported the past, and planned, engagement with customers;
▪ noted the toolkit in place and that it had been externally assessed;
▪ encouraged the implementation of high level critical path reporting;
▪ noted that the resource impact of the RNQ programme on the CP had yet to be determined;
▪ accepted the position updates on those workstreams at amber.

The Board fully acknowledged the scale and complexity of the work in hand, and commented positively on the achievements to date.

105/8 **NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

i **National Qualifications Update**

Dr Stewart presented the final CfE Update, and was pleased to report that all SQA milestones within SQA's CfE Programme had been met to schedule and the design principles that were agreed with the CfE Board at the outset of the work. This success was commended by the Board.
The CfE Programme was now closed.

Dr Stewart continued, advising that in response to the research and field work SQA had undertaken on the evaluation of the new National Qualifications, SQA had published its planned changes in May. A new programme - the Post Implementation Review (PIR) – and a supporting delivery plan with milestones had been established to deliver this work.

In the time since, and as a result of the recommendations of the Assessment and National Qualifications (ANQ) Group, and then later approval by the CfE Management Board, the Deputy First Minister had approached SQA to revise the assessment approach and remove unit assessment and units from National 5 and above. The Board would discuss this later in the meeting.

The Board noted the changes ahead and that from December reporting, the Revised National Qualifications Update would supersede the CfE Update.

ii **Report from the Certification Programme Group**

Ms Blair presented a full update on the Certification Programme Group (CPG), and was pleased to report progress to plan. She expanded on those factors reported at amber status, each of which was being monitored closely, with management actions in place to resolve the matters imminently.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

iii **Certification Lessons Learned 2016**

2016 had seen the delivery of all new National Qualifications for the first time, with SQA successfully delivering over 140,000 certificates. In opening the discussion, it was made clear that the resultant Lessons Learned action plan did not take account of the recently announced revisions to the National Qualifications.

Led by Ms Blair, and with input from the other Directors, the Board received a presentation outlining the scope of the extensive lessons learned exercise, which had reviewed the processes to plan and deliver SQA's Procedural Programme. This review had taken account of all internal interdependencies, and included input from each business directorate. Ms Blair rehearsed the outcomes of the Lessons Learned activity and the steps that would be taken to address the improvements identified. It was noted that those actions, with owners and timescales, would be monitored at the weekly meetings of the Certification Programme Group.

The Board was wholly reassured by the steps being taken, and was satisfied to note and approve the outcomes of the Lessons Learned activity. There was reassurance that SQA would continue to engage with centres and universities to ensure secure and successful delivery.

Discussion led onto SQA's appetite for and ability to engage with the Scottish Government's Digital Learning strategy. It was noted that SQA was giving consideration to the ways in which digital technologies could perhaps help to streamline and improve the experience of assessment for learners and centres. It was recognised however, that any SQA ambition to deliver digitally was contingent on centre readiness and that this may well vary by sector.

iv   **Revised National Qualifications**

The Chairman introduced the report on the Revised National Qualifications (RNQ), highlighting that whilst perhaps challenging in its discussions, the Board had to clearly focus on the remit of SQA and its role in governance. Whilst SQA would continue to engage with and raise awareness of the practicalities of delivery for the wider education system, the Board's remit was to maintain the standard, quality and integrity of Scotland's qualifications and today's deliberations would cover how SQA would ensure the secure delivery of certification in 2017 whilst concurrently developing and implementing the changes to the assessments of National Qualifications.

As mentioned previously, the DFM had written to ask SQA to remove mandatory unit assessment and extend the course assessment at National 5 (for 2017-18) Higher (for 2018-19) and Advanced Higher (for 2019-20). This would have implications on qualifications design and assessment, internal and external policy, product specification and support, and internal operational and system arrangements. It should also not be overlooked that SQA had to continue to deliver its existing Business As Usual commitments, and with approximately six months to execute and implement the National 5 revisions, the impact on staff resource would be considerable. It was confirmed that staff welfare and engagement continued to be a priority for SQA, and featured highly in the Change Programme workstreams.

Detailed planning was underway to scope the required activities and associated resource requirements. The Board was reassured to hear that a cross-directorate workshop would take place that day to discuss deliverables, dependencies and a communication plan. It was noted that any outstanding actions that must be completed from the Post Implementation Review (minute reference 105/8 i) would be subsumed into the RNQ programme, and as part of the governance arrangements, progress would be reported to, and monitored by, the Change Programme Board.

The Board noted the significant piece of work ahead and the work underway.

105/9   **FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Mrs Ellison, Director of Finance tabled and presented the Quarter 2 forecast update, which reflected the amalgamation of recent submissions from the business.

In particular, it was noted that the fixed charge arrangement with Local Authorities for NQs along with fixed prices since 2010 had impacted on income; had SQA billed on actual candidate entry levels, income would have increased by £1.2m in 2015-16, and reduced the requirement for additional Scottish Government grant. The Board was reminded that the financial position was discussed regularly with the Scottish Government, with continued dialogue on how to manage SQA's funding arrangements.

The Board was pleased to note that the Scottish Government had approved the 'Spend to Save' proposal to continue the modernisation of systems.

The Board noted the current forecast position and issues identified. At this point, it was also suggested that it would be of assistance for the Board to receive a cashflow projection as part of the reporting format. This would be included for the next meeting.

105/10 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Mr McMorris, Director of Business Development provided the Board with a comprehensive update on business development activity in all key markets as at end September 2016 and against Q2 targets.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

105/11 CORPORATE

i Risk Register

Ms Cahill presented the current status of the Corporate Risk Register, which reflected any recent updates as a result of internal monitoring and deliberations.

She advised that in light of the newly announced RNQ requirements, the risk relating to staff resource and workload had been increased. It was also noted that the potential impact of the EIS industrial action had been reduced as a result of action having been suspended. The Board also suggested an increase to the net impact scoring for additional grant requirements for 2016-17.

The Board noted the contents of the Register and endorsed the presentation of these revisions to the Audit Committee for approval.

ii SQA Corporate Plan 2017-20

Ms Cahill presented the draft corporate plan, which was currently being considered for comment by SQA Committees, the Advisory Council, the Partnership Group and the Scottish Government.

The Board approved the existing purpose and recommended that Strategic Goal 1 should be revised to reflect the language of the SQA Change Programme. It was also suggested that the specific strategic drivers could be edited and abbreviated to avoid repetition.

iii Corporate Social Responsibility Annual Review 2015-16

Mr MacGowan and Mr Priest joined the meeting and provide a high level overview of the activity during the past 18 months.

The Board was impressed by the range and amount of activity that had been undertaken, especially in light of the tremendous pressures staff had been working in, and passed on their recognition for the great achievements.

105/12 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

    i   **Accreditation Committee – 27 September 2016**

Ms Wilkinson outlined the main areas of business covered at the formal meeting, when they had welcomed Mr S Davidson along to provide an update on the SQA Accreditation IT application. Considerations had also included an update on the Standards and Framework Commissioning projects, where it had been concluded that whilst new arrangements were now in place, concerns remained about timescales and the expertise required to support it. The Board noted the update and the draft minutes for formal approval that the next meeting of the Committee.

    ii   **International & Commercial Committee – 1 August 2016**

Mr O'Hare had reported on the business at the last meeting of the Board, and members now noted the minutes.

    iii   **Qualifications Committee – 5 August 2016**

Mrs Walsh had reported on the business at the last meeting of the Board, and members now noted the minutes.

    iv   **Advisory Council – 5 September 2016**

Dr Thomson reported on the business of the last meeting, where members had discussed August Certification and use of the Insight tariff scale. The Board noted the update and the draft minutes for formal approval that the next meeting of the Committee.

    v   **Qualifications Committee – 21 September 2016**

The Board noted the draft minutes, which would be formally approved at the next meeting of the Committee.

    vi   **Qualifications Committee – 10 October 2016**

Deliberations had centred on the implications of the revisions to the National Qualifications, the outputs of which had been covered in that day's Board meeting. The Committee had been resolute that above all else, SQA must maintain the integrity of the qualifications.

105/13 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no further matters raised.

The Board noted the Meeting Dates for 2017

105/14 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would be held on Tuesday 6 December 2016 in Arrol, Lowden.