

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 9 APRIL 2008

Minutes of the forty-seventh meeting of the Board of Management held at 10 am on Wednesday 13 February 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

In attendance

Ms J Blair (item 47/9 only)
Mr M Haggerty (item 47/8 only)
Mr M Hughes (item 47/8 only)

A private session of the Board was held from 10 am to 10.45 am.

47/1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Mitchell and Mr Young.

47/2 **PREVIOUS MEETING**

i **Minutes of meeting held on 11 December 2007**

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

iii **Action Grid**

The Board noted and agreed the action grid.

47/3 **MATTERS ARISING**

46/7 **Skills Strategy**

The Chairman referred to the letter received from Fiona Hyslop MSP in reply to the SQA response to the development of *Skills for Scotland*. A follow up meeting with the Cabinet Secretary was being scheduled.

46/10 **Accreditation Committee – IT out of hours strategy**

Ms McCallum advised that an anti-virus protection software was being installed that would facilitate external wireless capability from April 2008 onwards. This would go to address the concerns of the Accreditation team for out of hours access. Once established, steps would be taken to ensure that wireless access was given to this business team as a matter of priority.

[It was agreed to reorder business and consider item 47/8 at the beginning of the meeting to allow full discussion of the Endorsement paper in light of Mrs McKay having to leave the meeting early].

47/8 **ENDORSEMENT**

The Board was presented with a proposal to establish a revised commercial endorsement service to customers in the UK and overseas. The substance of the proposal took into account the feedback received from the Qualifications Committee, International and Commercial Committee and Advisory Council in relation to both domestic and international endorsement.

The revised endorsement service had considered the wide range of services currently carried out under the banner of endorsement and proposed a more streamlined approach with two categories of endorsement, namely the endorsement of non SQA qualifications and the endorsement of resources offered through partners. The endorsement of training programmes in the UK market would be withdrawn, but would remain within international markets where it would be limited to Government agencies and departments.

The endorsement service would be subject to a rigorous set of prescribed criteria that demonstrated outcome based evidence for the quality assurance and assessment of the qualifications to be endorsed. This would be supported by effective governance arrangements and included clear approval routes for scrutiny of all requests.

The Board was encouraged to see that the revised arrangements took cognisance of the comments previously given, and members welcomed the clarity on the processes and procedures that would be used. During discussion, it was agreed that:

- After a period of operation, it would be useful to evaluate the efficiency of the revised arrangements and re-assess the position for ongoing requirements.
- Officers would be mindful of any potential market confusion between the terms 'SQA endorsement' and 'SQA accreditation'.
- The management of requests would include and be subject to final approval by the Executive Team; this process would be reviewed in due course.
- As part of regular business updates, reports on endorsement activity would be taken to Committees and the Board.

For the next meeting of the Board, it was agreed to present a proposed framework for the endorsement criteria, along with clarification of the term 'audit' when referring to the auditing of endorsement criteria. The Board was supportive of the streamlined and coherent approach to commercial endorsement and subject to receipt of the aforesaid paper the Board approved the proposal as set out.

Mrs McKay left the meeting.

47/4 **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Arrangements for April and May Board meetings

The Chairman informed the Board that the Chief Executive and the Director of Strategic Development would undertake a visit to China being led by the Cabinet Secretary in April. The Board agreed that the next scheduled Board meeting should proceed in the Chief Executive's absence.

The April meeting of the Board had been set aside for the annual away day. In light of a number of members being absent on that date, the Board was happy to proceed with the proposal to hold the away day on the date of the May meeting, and for it to take place in the central belt, focussing on discussions around the Skills Strategy.

It was noted that the arrangements for the Board strategic risk workshop would have to be reconsidered.

47/5 **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 that:

UK Vocational Qualifications Reform (UKVQR) Programme

There had been a recent programme meeting where positive discussion took place around ensuring that links with SCQF and the importance of networking with other awarding bodies was taken on board. Agreement had been reached on the need to present Scotland's position on taking forward the UKVQR.

1st National Economic Forum

The inaugural meeting of Scotland's National Economic Forum, bringing together key representatives from the private, public, third sector and trade unions, had been held at the beginning of February. The first meeting provided the opportunity for useful discussion on how to drive forward a debate on Scotland's economy, and encourage increased and shared understanding of Scotland's economic challenges and potential solutions. It had been agreed that SQA could play a pivotal role in delivering on the Government's Economic Strategy. This forum was seen as the correct and appropriate opportunity by which to achieve increased engagement with leaders of industry.

Edexcel Scanning farm in Hellaby

Edexcel scan a significant proportion of their examination papers and the visit had prompted thoughts around a number of opportunities for SQA, including the improvement of SQA's methods of marking, for example marker specialists, with the potential to introduce a front loaded quality assurance process.

It was agreed that a visit could be arranged for interested Board members.

47/6 **REPORT FROM CERTIFICATION PLANNING GROUP**

Further to discussions at the last Board meeting, the issues that had arisen as a result of the increased volume of appeals had been addressed and Ms McCallum was pleased to report that Question Paper production was back on track.

Commenting on the amber graded performance measures, she highlighted the following:

Centre Approval

Centres continued to submit late approval requests and a letter outlining the consequences of late submissions had been issued to centres and Directors of Education. The Board was assured that the matter was being closely managed by CPG.

Malpractice Review

A review of SQA's malpractice policy would be undertaken and the outcomes of this would be reported to a future meeting of the Audit and Performance Committee. This would not impact on the current diet and was likely to take effect in the 2009-10 certification year.

Higher Latin results in 2007

An investigation into results for Higher Latin in 2007 had identified a small number of manual scaling errors where marking and checking procedures had not been followed. A total of four candidates had been affected, resulting in an upgrade, and new certificates had since been issued. Dr Stewart had contacted the involved centres direct, and there had been no immediate response to date.

A full review had determined the need to establish more robust guidelines for central marking. For the current diet, manual scaling would be eliminated and an audit schedule for main diet procedures had been put in place.

Further updates on progress would be provided to the Board.

Core Skills Audit

The scope of this work had been widened and it had been agreed to subsume a review of core skills into the Continuous Improvement work.

47/7 DEVELOPMENT OF RESULTS ONLINE INTO MySQA

Mr Martin Hughes, Business Manager for Operations, and Mr Mike Haggerty, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Hughes provided a presentation on the lessons learned from Results Online in 2007 and demonstrated the rebranded website 'MySQA' for managing the delivery of electronic access to results in the 2008 Diet. The refreshed online service would provide candidates with the option to receive a text message and/or an e-mail, giving a summary of results on results day. Candidates would also be able to log onto the secure website to review full details of their achievements, the units and past qualifications. In the course of discussion it was highlighted that:

- Users would be referred back to their centre should they wish to change their name and/or address.
- A promotion campaign would commence in March and incorporate posters, mailers and proactive communication with centres.
- Mr Haggerty advised that a consistent media handling plan would be developed in close dialogue with the Scottish Government and centres. Cascade of information would be managed proactively, with all centres and appropriate stakeholders being contacted in mid-March.

- Robust usability testing was underway by SQA to ensure that expectations could be managed efficiently. In addition, IBM was conducting an independent review of the system performance in 2007 with the view to identifying improvements for 2008.

The Board welcomed the presentation and recognised the potential for enhancements to the benefit of examination candidates of Scotland in the future.

Mr Hughes and Mr Haggerty left the meeting.

47/9 FINANCE AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

The Chairman welcomed Ms Blair to the meeting.

i Current Performance

Ms Blair reported on the current performance to Quarter 3 of the financial year 2007-08 and drew attention to a number of key points relating to progress to date with SQA's Business Plan Objectives.

- The business case for NQGA Development Programme had been submitted to the Scottish Government in December 2007.
- Significant progress was being made with colleagues in LTS and the Scottish Government to advance the development of a new 3-18 assessment bank.
- Approval had been given to proceed with the development of a full business case for Dalkeith relocation.

With regard to international activity, it was suggested and endorsed that officers should consider staff development opportunities as part of the overseas consultancy contracts.

SQA Balanced Scorecard

Commenting on the red graded performance measures, Ms Blair reported on:

3 *deliver the accreditation service and development activities*

Slippage had occurred due to requests for more information from the Awarding Bodies. This was beyond the control of the Accreditation Unit.

4 *increase uptake in target markets by 3% v LY*

Although reporting as issue for concern, HND and SVQ entries had in fact increased and the measure was influenced by phasing of entries. It was suggested that future reporting on entries should differentiate domestic from international market.

16 *achieve environmental targets*

It was pleasing to note that paper consumption and business/inter-site mileage had reduced.

19 *achieve agreed efficiency savings*

The year to date position continued to report a £60k gap. Discussions were underway to identify opportunities for additional savings.

Corporate Risk Register

A number of new risks had been identified since the last report to the Board:

5 New 3-18 assessment bank

It was clarified that the contract in place to manage the current 5-14 item bank was due to expire at the end of November. It was expected to have a new supplier appointed by the end of March 2008; however this would not allow adequate time for a full and effective transfer of operations.

11 Department for Transport (DfT) of Dangerous Goods Driver training scheme

Further meetings had taken place with DfT around SQA compliance with European legislation. The Board was assured that the risk had been managed effectively and the status could now be reported as closed. In accordance with the remedial action taken, it had been agreed to undertake a complete review of the training programme.

The Board noted the report on current performance.

ii Draft Balanced Scorecard for 2008-09

Members had before them the draft balanced scorecard for 2008-09 and were asked to note the inclusion of a separate measure each for the work of SQA's Accreditation and regulatory function, and appointee management. Measure 19, around more efficient processes, had also been revised to reflect the wider continuous improvement activity underway in SQA.

The Board was agreed that a number of the measures should be re-visited to ensure they accurately and appropriately reflect the desired final outcome. It was also suggested that in addition to percentage targets, it would be useful to include absolute numbers as part of the performance reporting.

The Board gave broad support and approval to progress the definitions of the scorecard.

Ms Blair left the meeting.

47/10 COMMITTEE REPORTS

i Accreditation Committee held on 6 December 2007

Professor Simmons pointed out that one target within the operational plan - to reduce the number business flights – had become obsolete due to increased workload and the need to attend a growing number of UK wide meetings.

He also provided an update on the Accreditation Unit Away Day held in February, and advised that this would be reported in the next minutes of the Committee. Of particular interest had been a presentation on SQA's role as an awarding body.

It was agreed to circulate a copy of the presentation to members of the Board.

ii **Advisory Council held on 4 February 2008**

Dr Stewart outlined the main business covered at the last meeting of the Committee, where members had:

- Considered an update on work with the skills strategy and the direction of the work with SSCs in relation to their involvement with SQA in qualifications development.
- Contributed to full discussion on the review of Qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5, and the options for a Baccalaureate Model in Science and Languages at Higher and Advanced Higher.

A joint meeting of the Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee had taken place at the end of January, where members had welcomed input into discussions around further work on qualifications and assessment in preparation for the forthcoming consultation.

iii **International and Commercial Committee held on 28 November 2007**

The Board noted the contents of the minutes.

47/11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no matters raised for discussion.

PAPERS FOR NOTING

PFN 1 Financial Report to 31 December 2007.

The Board noted the contents of the report. It was noted that the bad debts related mainly to training providers.

47/12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Management would be held on Wednesday 9 April 2008. Venue to be confirmed. *Later:* Meeting scheduled to take place in the Chief Executive's Office, the Optima Building, Glasgow.