

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 25 APRIL 2012

For approval

Minutes of the seventy-fourth meeting of the Board of Management held at 11.30 am on Wednesday 14 March 2012 in Arrol, Lowden

**Members**

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

\* indicates present

**Officers**

- \* Ms M Cahill
- \* Ms L Ellison
- \* Mr R Gibson
- \* Ms K McCallum
- \* Mr J McMorris
- \* Ms J Ross
- \* Dr G Stewart

**Observers**

- \* Mr M McVicar

The formal meeting of the Board had been preceded by a meeting with Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, which had included a tour of the Lowden offices, and a brief presentation by Mr McMorris on the breadth of SQA provision and range of activities in Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally.

**74/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, including Mr McVicar from the Scottish Government. Apologies were received from Mr Gallagher and Mr McKay.

**74/2 DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

**74/3 PREVIOUS MEETING****i Minutes of meeting held on 25 January 2012**

The Board approved the minutes, which had been redrafted to reflect the discussion at the previous meeting.

**ii Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

**iii Workplan**

The contents of the workplan were discussed. It was confirmed that the scheduling of the discussion of the IS strategy to the June meeting would not impact on any forthcoming IS related projects or spend approvals required. It was also agreed that it would be timeous to integrate the broader discussion

on SQA's strategic approach - including the Strategy for Growth - into the consideration of the draft corporate plan at the August meeting.

#### 74/4 **MATTERS ARISING**

Any matters arising would be covered in the course of the agenda.

#### 74/5 **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman was pleased to announce the reappointment of Mr Edgar and Mrs Walsh to the Board, for a period of four years.

The Chairman also formally recorded and recognised the Chief Executive's response to a call to provide evidence before the Education and Culture Committee on 28 February 2012.

#### 74/6 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the recent CfE public and press interest relating to the introduction and uptake of the new qualifications. She restated that the option of triple running was not viable and would present an unacceptable additional risk to SQA's ability to deliver a successful diet.

The Board debated a wide range of issues with regard to the progress of CfE implementation and associated risks.

Whilst the Board reaffirmed its support for CfE and the significant contribution that it would make to Scottish Education, members were unassured on the state of readiness and expressed concern that schools and departments were at different stages of preparedness for the new qualifications for CfE.

The Board noted that Education Scotland would undertake a deep audit of schools to gauge their readiness for the introduction of the new qualifications. This was due to be concluded by end March 2012, and would help to identify the support needs of schools for implementation. The Board was assured that the criticality of assessing interdependencies across stakeholders and partners in Scotland had been escalated through the correct mechanisms and to the CfE Management Board. SQA officers would continue to raise these concerns to the appropriate level and ensure close monitoring of progress.

In discussion around the requirement for schools and Local Authorities to comply with the introduction of the new qualifications, there was a clear consensus that a wholesale delay of the qualifications would not be beneficial; amongst other things, to do so would destabilise the learning of those learners currently in the S2 cohort.

SQA continued to work with partners, stakeholders and the Education community across Scotland to share information on the new qualifications and to understand assessment and qualification approaches at a detailed level. This would ensure that appropriate plans would be in place to support the demands for the 2013-14 diet. The Board was assured that SQA would also continue to ensure that the CfE Communications Strategy was appropriate and targeted the correct audiences. Equally, officers would manage carefully the potential for any exposure to reputational risk for SQA.

In closing the discussion, Dr Stewart advised that following engagement with education stakeholders, and in the interests of inclusivity and consistency in the National Qualifications, new Access qualifications would be referred to as Nationals. This would take effect from 30 April 2012, in time for the introduction of the new qualifications in the academic session 2013-14.

Ms Cahill also provided an update on the outcomes of the Voluntary Early Scheme.

#### **74/7 FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE AND 2012-13 BUDGET**

Members had before them a tabled paper on the 2012-13 budget, as informed by the Quarter 0 forecast exercise.

Ms Ellison was pleased to advise that Scottish Government approval had been given to retain £750k as a working capital balance at the year end. This was very much welcomed by the Board as a positive step forward.

Ms Ellison highlighted that the 2012-13 budget had been prepared in line with the draft corporate plan objectives, and had been based on very challenging assumptions. She went on to outline two additional budget pressures, which related to the cost of the development and implementation of the Post Result Services, and the affordability of awarding pay progression to staff. Officers were in dialogue with Scottish Government officials to identify means by which to absorb these costs.

The Board approved the budget for 2012-13 as detailed in table 1 of the paper, and noted officers' intentions to explore options with the Scottish Government for pay progression in 2012-13.

Discussion also took place around the hidden costs and staff time spent on Curriculum for Excellence activity across the business. It was noted that a meeting had been scheduled with the Scottish Government in April to discuss the long term financial plan for SQA.

#### **74/8 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Board noted the summary of progress for the period to 29 February 2012.

Total awarding activity was on track with a small variance reported in Consultancy activity.

#### **74/9 CfE UPDATE**

This agenda item was considered as part of 74/6 above.

#### **74/10 REPORT FROM CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME GROUP**

The Board noted the contents of the report and that the e-Marking project reports at amber had made significant progress since the previous meeting of the Board. A number of small improvements remained in the performance of the software and SQA officers were working closely with RM to address the issues. It was anticipated that the outstanding activity would be successfully concluded by the end of March 2012.

## 74/11 COMMITTEE REPORTS

### i **Audit Committee – 14 November 2011**

A verbal update had been provided to the previous meeting of the Board. The approved minutes were noted the by the Board.

### ii **Audit Committee – 24 February 2012**

Mr Edgar provided a verbal update on the business covered, which had included consideration of the Quarterly Performance Review, the presentation of which had been reviewed and successfully improved. The new external auditors, KPMG had attended their first meeting of the Audit Committee, and the meeting had also received the final presentation from Audit Scotland.

The Audit Committee had concluded with a very constructive workshop on environmental risks and their potential impact on SQA activities. The outcomes of this session would be integrated into the overall corporate risk register. It was suggested at this point that in light of that day's Board discussions, the risk matrix in relation to SQA's exposure to reputational risk should be reviewed.

### iii **Advisory Council – 30 January 2012**

Prof Simmons provided an update on the business covered, which had included discussion on the refreshed Memorandum of Understanding; the final version of this document would be presented to the Board in April for noting. There had also been a productive debate around the implications of the Post 16 Review, and this would be revisited at the next meeting of the Advisory Council on 19 March 2012.

### iv **Qualifications Committee – 15 February 2012**

Mrs Walsh referred to the minutes in the Board pack, and highlighted the very welcome move to a new competence-based assessed product type to support Modern Apprenticeship Framework. Instigated on the recommendation a recent audit, by SQA's internal auditors, the committee had also considered the proposed plan for external verification of internal assessment in the coming session; it was noted that this would be presented annually to the Qualifications Committee. There had also been a full discussion around the expansion of Scottish Baccalaureate provision and a proposed way forward had been submitted to Ministers for consideration.

### v **International & Commercial Committee – 24 February 2012**

Mr O'Hare updated members on continued progress around pipeline reporting, and that the committee had also participated in a robust and challenging debate around the draft pipeline for 2012-13.

## 74/12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dr Stewart advised that SQA would undertake a consultation on its proposed approach to exercising its new power under section 96 (7) of the Equality Act 2010. As a self-regulating body for schools, this power would enable SQA to specify when reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates should not be made. It related only

to general qualifications, which were National Qualifications in Scotland, and vocational qualifications would not be considered. The consultation would run for a period of three months, and it was confirmed that a report on the outcome of the consultation, with recommendations, would be submitted to the Board for approval later in the year.

It was agreed that the Board would receive a copy of the Annual Equality Review, as referred to in PFN 1.

**74/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 25 April 2012, in Arrol, Lowden.