

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 17 FEBRUARY 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Thursday 21 January 2021 by video conference.

Members

- * Mr D Middleton (Chair)
- * Ms F Robertson (Chief Executive)
- * Ms E Craig
- * Ms A Davis
- * Mr S Hagney
- * Mrs J Handley
- * Dr W Mayne
- * Mr H McKay
- * Mr G Smith
- * Mr R Stewart
- * Dr K Thomson

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- * Mr M Baxter
- * Mr L Downie
- * Mr J McMorris
- Ms J Ross
- * Dr G Stewart
- * Mrs D Mahmoud

Observers

Ms A Kerr, Committee Manager
Mr F Cronin, Awarding 2021 Programme Director
Ms M McKerrell, Head of Quality Assurance (NQ)
Ms L Joyce, Head of Humanities, Care and Services

* Indicates present on the call

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting no apologies had been received.

1.11 Declaration of Any Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest raised in relation to the agenda.

Whilst not a conflict of interest, it was acknowledged that Dr Thomson and Mr Hagney held an interest through their positions as Heads of Centre. Dr Thomson pointed out that he had to attend separate meetings where he would have to declare his membership of the SQA board. The Chair noted Dr Thomson's point with thanks.

1.12 Matters Arising

There were no other matters arising that would not be covered in the course of the agenda.

1.2 Chief Executive Update

The Chief Executive provided the Board with an overview of the position following the First Minister's announcement on 4 January, signalling an extended period of remote learning for learners, which necessitates changes to the model set out to Ministers in December 2020. She reported that a letter would be issued to the Deputy First Minister that afternoon, setting out options and would be shared with the Board.

For Higher National and Vocational (HNVQ) qualifications, the Chief Executive reported that SQA had been working with Colleges Scotland and representatives from across the sector on adjustments to arrangements, under the auspices of the new HNVQ 2021 Group.

Finally, the Chief Executive updated the Board on the recruitment of the new Director of Policy, Analysis and Standards

The Board noted the update.

1.3 **Awarding 2021**

1.31 **Delivery Assurance Update – Awarding 2021 Programme**

The Board welcomed Fintan Cronin, Awarding 2021 Programme Director, to the meeting to provide an update on the target outcomes, scope, and current status of the programme, as well as actions to address any challenges.

Mr Cronin defined the priority areas as agreed with the Executive Management Team, including safe and secure certification, equity, and fairness, and protecting integrity of qualifications and provided the key events timeline, highlighting that the programme scope and associated delivery planning had been impacted by the First Minister's announcement of school closures and continued remote learning.

Mr Cronin provided an overall programme and RAG status, outlining measures in place to address reported issues and rebalance the programme status.

The Board thanked Mr Cronin for the clear and informative presentation, acknowledging the position as reported, and expressing concern regarding the implication and uncertainty of ongoing periods of remote learning on the status of the programme. The Board supported the focus on what it would be possible for the SQA to deliver, in the knowledge that the passage of time would pose a limit on this.

1.32 **Alternative Certification Model 2021 Update**

Ms Blair introduced the update, outlining that NQ 2021 Working Group had been working to identify further alternatives to the certification model, including scenarios, implications, and next steps. She reported a strong sense of co-ownership within the working group and a commitment to focus on the art of the possible in order to deliver for learners in 2021.

Ms Blair then handed over to Ms McKerrell, Head of NQ Quality Assurance, who provided an overview of the key issues discussed by the NQ 2021 Working Group and outlined the continued focus and commitment of the group to retain the principles of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) as had been published in December 2020, that certification be based on learning and quality assurance.

Ms McKerrell outlined the substantial understanding standards programme underpinning the programme of work, highlighting the importance of teacher and lecturer engagement.

Outlining next steps, Ms McKerrell reported that colleagues continued work at pace on the options for moving forward, while remaining practical and realistic. Further communications from the NQ 2021 steering and working groups would be issued to the system in due course and any planned changes would be advised to the Scottish Government.

The Board welcomed the update, discussing the position as outlined and associated timelines for key decisions to be made. The Board supported the extensive work being undertaken by both SQA colleagues and within the steering and working groups.

It was noted that the Board would meet again on Thursday 4 February where they would receive a further update on the position and actions following the next statement from the First Minister on 2 February.

1.33 **HNVQ 2021 Update**

Ms Joyce, Head of Humanities, Care and Services, joined the meeting to provide an overview of the position on Higher National and Vocational Qualifications (HNVQ), following the series of changes made to reflect the increasing challenges that were being faced by colleges and training providers.

Ms Joyce reported that colleagues continued to work closely with centres delivering the wide range of self-regulated vocational group awards to provide support and guidance where needed.

Ms Joyce outlined the alternative approach to awarding that had been developed through a process of co-creation and co-agreement, working to the same core principles as NQ Awarding, with a focus on quality assurance, with a wide range of stakeholders and supporting infrastructure to support delivery and assessment on HNVQ awards. Ms Joyce reported the approach had been approved by the newly formed HN Working Group at their first meeting the previous week.

The Board thanked Ms Joyce for the presentation clearly laying out the approach for HNVQ and discussed the importance of these efforts remaining a whole system approach, maintaining clarity around the role of SQA.

The Chair thanked Board members for their time and input to discussions throughout the meeting and noted that the Board would meet again at 1.45pm on Thursday 4 February 2021.