

**SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY****BEO27/1.12 i****BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 27 MAY 2021**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 11.30am on Thursday 18 March 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
- ██████████
- \* Dr G Stewart
- Mrs D Mahmoud

**Observers**

- ██████████, Committee Manager
- ██████████, Interim Corporate Office Support
- Mr J Sewell, Scottish Government
- ██████████, Awarding 2021 Programme Director

\* Indicates present on the call

**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Mr Jonathan Sewell from the Scottish Government who would be observing the meeting.

The Chair noted that apologies had been received from Ms Handley.

**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 Mr Hagney and Dr Thomson held an interest through their positions as Heads of Centre. Furthermore, it was noted that Ms Davis and Mr Hagney had children studying at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

The Chair noted that members of the Board would never be put in a position directly to affect the outcomes relating to their centres or family members.

**1.12 Minutes of the previous meetings****i 4 February 2021**

The minutes of 4 February 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**ii 17 February 2021**

The minutes of 17 February 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**iii 25 February**

The minutes of 25 February 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**iv 4 March 2021**

The minutes of 4 March 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to an amendment around the recording of the appeals consultation.

**1.13 Matters Arising**

Ms Craig informed the Board of discussion that had taken place at the meeting of the Performance Committee around human rights impact assessments, noting that the document would be reported to the Board for discussion at a future meeting.

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

**1.2 Chief Executives Update**

The Chief Executive provided the Board with an update on the appeals consultation which had been issued the previous week following discussions at the NQ working group, NQ 2021 group, Qualifications Committee and Board. She noted that the Board would be kept updated as responses were received to inform the development of the draft appeals process. In the HNVQ space, the Chief Executive noted that the final stages of modifications to assessment were near completion and that the Ministerial Taskforce on HE/FE would meet again the following week and continue to engage with the College sector to provide support.

Updating on communications, the Chief Executive reported that a leaflet, which had been developed in partnership with centres, local authorities, and with input from young people, would issue in shortly to every learner and serve to provide clarity and guidance to young people on the Alternative Certification Model and how awarding would work in 2021.

The Board noted that the Deputy First Minister would speak with SQA staff the following day through a virtual all staff briefing, providing an important opportunity for staff to put forward questions.

The Board noted the update, commenting on the importance of continued clear engagement and communications from both SQA and the Scottish Government to centres and learners.

## 2 PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Delivery Assurance Report – Awarding 2021

The Board welcomed [REDACTED], Awarding 2021 Programme Director, to the meeting to provide an overview of current status of the programme, key dates, issues and risks.

[REDACTED] noted that the programme was currently in design and delivery mode with an overall status of amber, and that colleagues would continue to review and assess risks and issues across the programme on an ongoing basis to report into the Board.

The Board thanked [REDACTED] for his clear presentation and reassurance that all programme activity was operating and being managed effectively.

The Board discussed the shape of results both locally and nationally, noting that the programme's focus was working to ensure that the results achieved in awarding 2021 would be fair and credible.

The Board welcomed the presentation, accepting the overall amber programme position and noted that a further update would be brought to the Board at their next meeting on 31 March.

### 2.2 Financial Performance Report

Mr Baxter, Director of Finance and Corporate Service, presented the Financial Performance Report, noting that the position experienced over the past few months highlighted decisions to be taken forward before the end of financial year.

Mr Baxter highlighted that, as it had been an unprecedented year, this is reflected in the continual impact on financial forecasting and assured the Board that finance colleagues continued to engage with Scottish Government to ensure SQA and Scottish Government financial planning assumptions are aligned.

The Board noted the position.

### 2.3 Equality Mainstreaming Report

The Board welcomed Ms Davren, Head of Human Resources, and [REDACTED], Corporate Planning Manager, to the meeting to present an overview of the Equality Mainstreaming Report, including an annual breakdown of employment monitoring information, equal pay, and gender diversity information.

Ms Davren highlighted key messages within the report, including SQA's draft equality outcomes and contributory actions for 2021-25.

The Board welcomed the report, discussing the high engagement levels with this work, noting that this increase in data would aid comparability year on year. The Board considered the link between the data and action planning to ensure this work is practical and impactful.

The Board recorded their approval of the report, supporting the outcomes and actions therein. It was agreed that the Board would welcome a further update on work undertaken toward the action plan following the conclusion of awarding 2021.

### **3 PAPERS FOR APPROVAL**

#### **3.1 2021-22 Business Plan**

Mr Baxter presented the 2021-22 SQA Business Plan, providing an overview of the key objectives, targets, milestones, and indicators for the year immediately ahead, aligned to the National Performance Framework, and linked to budgeting information. Mr Baxter noted that a copy of SQA's business plan would also be provided to the Scottish Government prior to the start of the relevant financial year.

The Board welcomed the document, with members supporting the inclusion of ways of working, environmental impact considerations and enhanced research strategy, as discussed by the Advisory Council. The Board discussed the work being undertaken around the Fair Work Framework in delivering outcomes and Mr Baxter agreed to engage with Mr Smith further offline to ensure appropriate reference within the plan.

The Board discussed the explicit link between the business plan and equality outcomes set for the organisation, noting the importance of clarity and emphasis on this within the plan.

The Board approved the 2021-22 Business Plan, noting that SQA would continue to engage with Scottish Government colleagues around timings, including ministerial approval.

#### **3.2 Budget 2021-22**

Mr Baxter set out the opening budget position for 2021/22, including key assumptions and information, noting that in previous years the measurement had been taken from the most recent Q3 position, however due to the impact of Covid 19 it had been deemed more appropriate to show the movement from the same point in the 2019/20 financial year.

Mr Baxter reported that the Covid 19 crisis continued to have a significant impact on SQA, which had been reflected in the 2021/22 budget and was based on numerous assumptions including the number of appeals and returning to business as usual in 2022. He highlighted that any change to these assumptions could have a considerable impact on the figures provided and finance colleagues would work closely with their business areas to report any known changes as soon as possible which would then be communicated to the Scottish Government. On-going engagement with the Scottish Government was key.

The Board welcomed sight of the paper, noting the position as reported and, following points of clarification, were content to approve the 2021/22 budget.

#### **3.3 Accreditation Committee Standing Orders**

Mr Stewart, as Convenor of the Accreditation Committee presented the revised Accreditation Committee standing orders that had been approved at the committee's January 2021 meeting following two minor adjustments.

The Board accepted Mr Stewarts assurance as Convenor of the Committee and were content to approve.

### 3.4 **Contract Recommendation – Permanent & Fixed Term Recruitment**

Mr Baxter presented the contract recommendation, noting that a tender exercise had been carried out in line with SQA's Procurement Policy and the report and attached recommendations provided a summary the process followed and the outcome of the tender.

The Board discussed the use of the procurement process to promote living wage, fair work and equality in awarding contracts, and the evidencing of this within the tendering process and were content to approve the contract recommendation.

## 4 **PAPERS FOR NOTING**

### 4.1 **Qualifications Delivery**

#### 4.1.1 **National Qualifications Certification Programme**

The Board noted the contents of the National Qualifications Certification Programme Group report.

#### 4.1.2 **Higher National and Vocational Qualifications Certification Programme**

The Board noted the contents of the HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme Group report.

### 4.2 **Cash Position**

The Board noted the position for the year based on the 2020-21 Period 11 accruals forecast, accepting it as an assurance on the current position.

### 4.3 **Committee Reports**

#### 4.3.1 **Accreditation Committee – 26 January 2021**

Mr Stewart reported that the Accreditation Committee had met on 26 January. The Board noted the minutes of the meeting in the papers.

#### 4.3.2 **Qualifications Committee – 23 February 2021**

Dr Thomson provided a verbal update to the Board on the Qualifications Committee meeting on 23 February, noting that the minutes of the Committee would be reported to the Board once finalised.

#### 4.3.3 **Advisory Council – 8 March 2021**

In Ms Handley's absence, Deputy Convenor Mr Hagney provided a verbal update on the business of the Advisory Council meeting on 8 March.

#### 4.3.4 **Performance Committee – 10 March 2021**

Ms Craig provided a verbal report to the Board on the business of the Performance Committee meeting on 10 March, reporting that that the Committee had reviewed the revised Performance Framework and noted that

this work would support the Committee position to report performance to the Board.

**4.35 Audit Committee – 15 March 2021**

Mr McKay provided a verbal report to the Board on the business of the Audit Committee meeting on 15 March, reporting that the Committee had reviewed the revised Corporate Risk Register which had been expanded to include risk and opportunities reports. The Committee had also undertaken their review of effectiveness for the year 2020.

**5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business raised.

**6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair noted that the Board would meet again on 31 March to receive a progress update on the appeals consultation.