

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

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BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 27 MAY 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Thursday 15 April 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
- Ms M McKerrell, Head of QA (NQ)
- ██████████, Awarding 2021 Programme Director
- Mr S Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance

* Indicates present on the call

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including:

- Ms McKerrell, Head of QA (NQ); and
- ██████████, Awarding 2021 Programme Director
- Mr Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance

The Chair noted that 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 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 Matters Arising

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

1.2 Chief Executive's Update

The Chair handed to the Chief Executive for a brief update. The Chief Executive acknowledged that the Scottish Government had now moved into the pre-election period, with manifestos being published. She reported that the NQ 2021 group had met the previous Friday. This included discussion of the concern in the system about assessments being undertaken in schools. Joint communications had been issued to teachers, parents and young people underlining the modification to assessment this year and the flexibilities offered to centres in their approach to evidence gathering, including the assessment approach. There is no requirement to replicate a full exam diet and local communication from schools to parent and learners was critical.

The Chief Executive reported that the recruitment process for the Director of Communications post was ongoing and would be concluded shortly.

The Board noted the update and that all processes were on track and being actively managed.

1.3 Awarding 2021

1.31 ACM Update

Ms Blair introduced the ACM update, highlighting that a successful walk through of the end-to-end ACM process, excluding appeals, had taken place that week and noting her gratitude to all staff involved in getting the model to this stage.

Ms Blair handed to Ms McKerrell to provide a short presentation updating that the model had now moved into stage 2 of 5, which would run from April to May. She highlighted that a suite of documents had been published to provide clarity on the processes happening during this stage, including the consolidation of learning for learners returning to centres following the period of remote and blended learning and the gathering of evidence and local quality assurance at Local Authority level, where appropriate. A package of communications had been planned for release the following week to coincide with centres returning from Easter breaks, including guidance on the ACM and quality assurance, and an SQA academy course made available to support teachers through the process. SQA colleagues had also recorded a podcast with the Scottish Youth Parliament and NPFS, which would be released and shared through social media channels, to answer any questions that learners may have around the 2021 awarding process.

Ms McKerrell reported ongoing work between SQA, centres and Local Authorities to secure appointee release with full release anticipated to be secured by 26 April.

The Board noted the update, discussing the important of continued, effective communication and engagement with parents and learners, noting that SQA had also provided text to centres for use in their communications with learners and parents. Members noted that it would be valuable to have an understanding of the level of learner interaction with the information being communicated to them through different channels and Mr McMorris agreed to gather analytics on this to bring to the Board for information.

1.32 Delivery Assurance Report

██████████ provided an overview of current status of the programme, key dates, issues and risks, noting that the overall programme status remained at amber

██████████ reported good progress over a number of fronts, with any issues being actively tracked and managed across the programme.

The Board thanked ██████████ for the clear update and welcomed the ongoing work on contingency planning, noting that this would be brought to the Board following discussion by the Executive Team.

1.33 Appeals Update

Mr Baxter delivered a brief update on the appeals consultation, noting that the review and coding of responses was at an advanced stage. He led the Board through the headlines emerging from the responses and key issues being worked through in the work programme.

The Board welcomed the update and discussed the impact of the period of time between the release of provisional results to learners and results day, Ms Blair noted the importance of this time for SQA to undertake governance checks and other essential work ahead of centres return from the Summer break. It was suggested that the addition of an explanation of the function and importance of this period of time to the published frequently asked questions document may prove valuable for learners and parents.

The Chair thanked members for their time and input to discussions at the meeting and noted that the Board would meet again on 29 April 2021 at 1pm.