

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY**BEO29/1.12 ii****BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 1 JULY 2021**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Wednesday 12 May 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 S Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance
- ██████████, Appeals Project Manager

* Indicates present on the call

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Mr Borley and ██████████ who had been leading on the work in developing 2021 Appeals.

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.

The Chair then handed to the Chief Executive to provide a brief update on the position in centres around the sharing of assessment materials through online platforms which had received media attention. Centres were fully aware of the need to keep assessment material secure. Further communications had issued directly to centres both in response to these incidents and on security of assessment materials in general. The Board noted that many schools had been using a mixture of assessment materials, with no restriction on what materials could be used. SQA would continue to review the position.

BEO26/3 APPEALS REVIEW: MODEL

Mr Borley presented this item, providing an overview of the proposed appeals model for National Qualifications in 2021, that had been developed following engagement with stakeholders, a public consultation and discussion with both the Qualifications Committee and Advisory Council. Mr Borley noted the inclusion of additional appendices for Board review, including:

- The analysis of responses to SQA's appeals consultation;
- Draft Equality Impact Assessment; and
- Draft Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment;

He highlighted that the impact assessments were iterative and would be finalised once the appeals model had received Board approval.

Mr Borley led the Board through the core issues of the model, including the importance of clear headline messaging that sets out roles and responsibilities in the context of Awarding 2021.

The Board welcomed sight of the documents, recognising that these were policy documents and other messaging would go out to the wider system.

The Board discussed the core issues as raised by Mr Borley, with wide support for allowing candidates to signal intent to appeal from the end of June and the provision of a priority appeals service for candidates with immediate progression. Members noted that the provisional results date had been moved from 28 May to 25 June to allow for additional learning and teaching time in response to the move to online learning in January, SQA had explored effective mobilisation for opening an appeals service in June, but this was not feasible given centre closure over the summer. The Board requested this be made clear to Government in the presentation of the service.

Members discussed in detail the issues surrounding the symmetrical approach to appeals, including raising a number of potential concerns, whilst also acknowledging the principle of demonstrated attainment was central to symmetry. The Board discussed and acknowledged the risks and issues surrounding an asymmetric approach, considering system resource to support appeals and perceptions. The balance of view was in favour of the proposed approach.

The Board requested sight of the planned communications timeline and supporting resources including FAQs that would be made available to support the model, noting that strength and clarity of message would be essential.

Update: This was provided to the Board by email on 18 May.

Regarding support arrangements for learners over the summer, the Board agreed with comments from the Advisory Council that these would be critical and should be supported by the whole system and led by the Scottish Government.

The Board endorsed the proposed model to be presented to Ministers for comment, acknowledging the issues and concerns raised and highlighted that every opportunity should be explored to support learners in this process.

The Chair thanked the Board for their time and input to this important discussion and, in closing, noted that the new Director of Communications, Mr John Booth, would start in post on 14 June.