

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B142/1.43

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 27 JANUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Thursday 28 October 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
- * Dr K Thomson

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- * Mr M Baxter
- * Mr L Downie
- * Mr J McMorris
- ██████████
- * Dr G Stewart
- * Mrs D Mahmoud
- * Ms B Black
- * Mr J Booth

Observers

- * ██████████
- * ██████████
- * Ms N Crowley, Head of Chief Executive's Office

* Indicates present on the call

1 OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting that apologies had been received from:

- Anna Davis;
- Dr Wendy Mayne; and
- Eleanor Craig.

The Chair updated the Board on arrangements that had been made for Professor Ken Muir to join the Board meeting on 12 November. He added that the Cabinet Secretaries office had proposed a meeting on the morning of

24 November and Corporate Office colleagues would be in touch with Board member to explore if this could be accommodated.

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 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 meeting on 1 September 2021

The minutes of the meeting on 1 September were approved by the Board.

1.13 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 over to the Chief Executive who reported on the significant and complex programme of work being undertaken in relation to 2022. Following Board discussions on 5 October, colleagues had been engaging with the Scottish Government around standards work and contingency planning for the 2022 exam diet, and those discussions continue.

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the announcement that the Cabinet Secretary had made to Parliament the previous day which had included a statement around reform of National Qualifications and an expectation that external assessment would continue. She noted that the Scottish Government had published a plan on their website, which had been shared with Board members prior to the meeting. Work on the reform of National Qualifications would be led by Louise Hayward. SQA and any successor body, should be heavily involved in each stage of this work. In the meantime, it was important to ensure the credibility of current qualifications is maintained.

The Board noted the update, highlighting that combining organisational reform and reform of National Qualifications, alongside ongoing delivery, could be extremely challenging.

1.3 Awarding 2021 and 2022 – Delivery Assurance Report

The Board welcomed [REDACTED], to the meeting to provide an overview of current status of the 2021 programme, key dates, issues and risks, and the mobilisation of 2022.

██████████ reported that the final appeals outcomes had been issued to centres the day before, bringing the programme into the final stages of completion. The programme status was at green and would be moving to closure in early November. ██████████ reported that work had begun to gather and assess feedback for lessons learned to take forward for work on 2022.

██████████ went on to report on the programme status for Awarding 2022 noting that good progress continued in the whole area of mobilisation including associated planning, resources and setting up of governance to support delivery. He led the Board through key risks and dependencies of the programme which the Board noted.

1.4 Qualifications Committee Standing Orders for Approval

Dr Thomson presented the Qualifications Committee standing orders, noting that the Qualifications Committee had reviewed these at its meeting on 15 September 2021 and the very minor changes proposed had been approved by the Committee.

The Board approved the Qualifications Committee standing orders.

1.5 Strategic Discussion on Education Reform

The Chief Executive led the Board through a presentation, providing an overview of key strategic themes and some areas for discussion. The Board was asked to consider what advice they might offer on ensuring system wide stability during this period of change and what challenges the organisation might face in implementing change, whilst also ensuring continuity of service.

The deadline for consultation responses was noted as 26 November 2021 and SQA would submit a full written response, developed and supported by evidence from across the organisation including engagement with all staff through information programmes and feedback sessions.

Following discussion and consideration, final Board input to the consultation response would be gathered at the meeting on 12 November.

The Board welcomed the presentation, agreeing that the current context was challenging and there was an overarching need to ensure staff welfare throughout, including a focus on the resolution of issues around job security. The Board agreed that the strategic vision would be key and strongly supported the breadth of analysis being collated to support the consultation response, acknowledging that there is a coherence to SQA's functions staying together.

The Board fully acknowledged the work going on across the organisation to respond to these requirements, whilst carrying out business as usual activities. They noted their thanks to the Executive Team and all staff.

No other business was raised, and the Chair brought the meeting to a close, noting that the Board would meet again on Friday 12 November, when they would be joined by Professor Ken Muir.