

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 19 JUNE 2019

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-third meeting of the Board of Management held at 10.00 am on Wednesday 8 May 2019, in Optima.

Members

- * Mr D Middleton (Chair)
- * Dr J Brown (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
- Ms M Cahill
- * Mr L Downie
- Ms L Ellison
- * Mr J McMorris
- * Ms J Ross
- * Dr G Stewart

Observers

- * Ms A Kerr, SQA
- * Mr A Dickson, SQA
- * Ms A Stansfield, Scottish Government

* indicates present

123/1 OPENING REMARKS**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair extended a welcome to all members of the Board, including Anna Stansfield, Head of the National Qualifications Team from the Scottish Government and Alan Dickson, Head of Finance, SQA, who would be deputising for Mrs Ellison in her absence.

He noted apologies had been received from Maidie Cahill and Linda Ellison.

1.11 Declaration of Any Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

1.12 Minutes of meeting held on 27 March 2019

The minutes were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendments:

- 3.2 it was agreed that ongoing reporting is sufficient – annual report not required.

1.13 Matters Arising

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

1.14 **Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

1.15 **Workplan 2019**

The Board noted the contents of the workplan.

1.2 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair opened with an update on the recruitment of the new SQA Chief Executive who had been announced as Fiona Robertson, currently Director of Learning in the Scottish Government. Ms Robertson is expected to come into post in July and will be undertaking handover meetings and the induction process over the course of June.

The Chair first highlighted some live issues of particular importance to the Board before progressing on to update on his engagements.

Dispute with Unite

SQA had been engaging in sessions with ACAS at which a detailed document had been drawn up and passed to Unite to review and respond. The Chief Executive highlighted that any points of action for SQA contained within the document are clearly recognised by the executive team as essential for the organisation moving forward.

Press Coverage of SQA's International Work

The Board were updated on SQA's position on the recent coverage in the press and the full position was made clear. The Chief Executive assured the Board that actions had been compliant with SQA policies which were in line with Audit Scotland guidelines. The current business position prompts no concern in terms of international business strategy and progress to plan.

The Board supported SQA's position, especially the explicit ongoing support provision for the individuals featured in news stories.

Education and Skills Committee

SQA will appear before the Education and Skills Committee on 27 May 2019 to give evidence in their on-going enquiry into subject choice and uptake. SQA will be submitting a paper to the Committee providing information relevant to the enquiry.

The Board welcomed the update, commenting on the value of discussion around strategy of communication and engagement.

The Chair continued to update the Board on his engagements since the last meeting of the Board including meeting with the Deputy First Minister and the Chief Executive, attending an event hosted by Colleges Scotland and attending the Practical Cake Craft makers meeting which he reported to be very interesting and valuable considering the sizable hospitality industry in the UK.

The Board noted the update.

1.3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Chief Executive presented a full update on her activities since the last meeting of the Board, starting with the renewal of the memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange. She noted that the programme has fully embraced the change in title of the SQA HND in international markets to the SQA Advanced Diploma.

Proactive activities undertaken by SQA to support Cyber Scotland Week (22-28 April), showcasing the portfolio of qualifications available, how they are being used in centres, the benefits for learners, and how they are being developed for the future. SQA produced a video case study showcasing the NPA, and HNC in Cyber Security, delivered at Kyle Academy in Ayr, and West College Scotland respectively, which generated some local coverage in the Greenock Telegraph. FutureScot, a magazine supplement supplied in The Times, also produced a piece featuring SQA's Cyber Security provision.

The Chief Executive also updated the Board on the Mental Health First Aid training that had been provided to volunteers throughout SQA. This had been noted as a very positive exercise that staff were already realising benefits from and providing support for colleagues across the business.

The Chief Executive went on to update on the review of the College campus verification position. SQA would be moving to cross campus verification in session 2018-19. This followed a period of single campus verification, which had been in place to allow Colleges a period of time to standardise their approach after regionalisation. All outcomes from this will be carefully reviewed at the end of the session.

In light of the recent press interest and to provide assurance to the Board, the Chief Executive provided a brief update on the National 5 and Higher Biology papers. The Chief Executive highlighted that all papers are set to precise and consistent standards and formulas in terms of content. Both papers were set to standard.

The Board noted the content of the Chief Executive's Report, celebrating particularly the positive work being done within the organisation in terms of mental health awareness and support.

123/2 PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

2.1 Quarterly Performance Review – Q4

SQA's senior management prepares a quarterly performance review (QPR) to allow the Executive Team and Board of Management to determine clearly the extent to which SQA is meeting its corporate objectives.

The Chief Executive noted that aspects currently sitting at amber were being managed.

The Board discussed the QPR noting the end of year position commenting that having this reported and discussed by the Performance Committee will aid in reporting to the Board moving forward.

2.2 **Board of Management Standing Orders**

The Chief Executive presented the revised Board of Management Standing Orders.

The Chief Executive highlighted the proposed changes to the Board standing orders comply with the SQA Framework Document, which sets out SQA's relationship with the Scottish Government. The Framework was drawn up by Scottish Government for Non-Departmental Public Bodies and was approved by the Board in 2017.

The Board discussed the proposed revisions highlighting suggested amendments and clarifications, noting that these would be actioned and the document brought back to the Board for approval at their meeting of 19 June 2019.

123/3 **PAPERS FOR APPROVAL**

3.1 **Annual Assurance Statement on Standards Activities**

SQA both self-regulates its qualifications, predominantly delivered in Scotland, and offers other externally regulated qualifications through Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and SQA Accreditation.

Dr Ken Thomson, Convenor of the Qualifications Committee, presented a report to the Board outlining how this had taken place in 2018/19 and provided key points of evidence on SQA's performance. The report had been reported to and discussed by the Qualifications Committee at their last meeting.

The Board welcomed and approved the report, noting that it was the first time a report of this kind had been compiled to this level of detail and commenting that it reflected both the breadth of SQA as an organisation and its operations.

3.2 **Q0 Forecast Update 2019-20**

Mr Dickson, Head of Finance, presented the Q0 forecast, an update of the 2019-20 draft budget which had been approved for onward submission to the Scottish Government by the Board at their meeting in February.

Mr Dickson drew the Board's attention to the challenge that the Scottish Government had put to the SQA to reduce the grant in aid requirement. The Board noted that the areas of flexibility were limited. The Board noted the implications of the options available to reduce expenditure and the effect these would have on the ability of the SQA to deliver its activities. A certain level of efficiency savings had already been taken into account in forward plans. The Board had concerns about the organisation's ability to achieve even the current planned savings but noted that these issues would be part of the ongoing dialogue with the Scottish Government.

The Board could see no achievable path to securing any additional savings and encouraged officers to present the consequences clearly to the Scottish Government. The chair was willing to become involved, if necessary, in correspondence or dialogue with Scottish Ministers.

The Board noted the position reported and officers will provide updates as discussions with the Scottish Government continue.

123/4 PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Qualifications Delivery

4.11 NQ Certification Programme

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

Ms Blair updated the Board on the current situation around College strikes noting that, although 8 May 2019 was the highest uptake date for strike action coming from college colleagues, the planned strikes for this date had been cancelled.

4.12 HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme

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

4.13 RNQ Programme Report

The Board noted the contents of the RNQ Programme report and that the programme was sitting at green.

The Board discussed the 2020 exam timetable noting that the dates had been released but would not be due for publication until the 2019 exam diet is complete. Dr Stewart highlighted that, due to changing patterns of presentation, there had been a noted increase in coincident exams incidences and this may result in a small extension of the exam timetable.

4.2 Change Programme Highlight Report

The Board noted the report on progress against the various workstreams of the SQA Change Programme.

Mr Downie updated the Board that SQA were currently in discussions with three key partners about engagement and skills onboarding. A transition plan will be put together for bringing new partners on stream in terms of skills and knowledge transfer. This will involve combined input from private and public tech partners.

The Board were pleased to note that CBS phase 3 had launched successfully, including a full payroll run for all staff without issue.

4.3 Corporate Risk Register

The Chief Executive presented the current status of the Corporate Risk Register, highlighting those changes as a result of deliberations at the recent meeting of the Audit Committee.

The Board discussed and recommended changes to two of the risks on the register. It was agreed that these proposed changes would be noted in brackets and put to the Audit Committee where they would be approved.

The Committee discussed and noted the Corporate Risk Register.

4.4 **Business Development Report**

The Board noted the Business Development activity in all key markets as at P12 (31 March 2019) against Q3 forecasts.

4.5 **Cash Position**

The Board noted the position for the year based on the 2018-19 Q3 accruals forecast, accepting it as an assurance on the current position.

The Board noted that operational expenditure typically does see an increase in March due to the nature of expenditure forecasts in the financial year.

4.6 **Committee Reports**

4.6.1 **Performance Committee – 18 February 2019**

Ms Craig noted that the business of the meeting had previously been reported to the Board verbally and highlighted that the minutes of the meeting had now been included in the papers for Board review.

The next meeting of the Performance Committee would take place on 20 May 2019.

4.6.2 **Qualifications Committee – 20 February 2019**

Dr Thomson noted that the business of the meeting had previously been reported to the Board verbally and highlighted that the minutes of the meeting had now been included in the papers for Board review.

4.6.3 **Qualifications Committee – 1 May 2019**

Dr Thomson provided a verbal update to the Board of the business of the Qualifications Committee meeting including:

- An update on the development of the apprenticeship family with SQA and SDS
- Showcasing Qualifications teams providing valuable insight, highlighting breadth of work throughout the organisation.

4.6.4 **Advisory Council – 25 February 2019**

Ms Handley noted that the business of the meeting had previously been reported to the Board verbally and highlighted that the minutes of the meeting had now been included in the papers for Board review.

4.64 **Audit Committee – 18 March 2019**

Mr McKay noted that the business of the meeting had previously been reported to the Board verbally and highlighted that the minutes of the meeting had now been included in the papers for Board review.

4.65 **Accreditation Committee**

Mr Stewart noted that the business of the meeting had previously been reported to the Board verbally and highlighted that the minutes of the meeting had now been included in the papers for Board review.

123/5 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The chair noted that the Risk Performance item that had been included on the agenda would not be taken at this Board meeting but rather would be reported to the Board at an appropriate time after being discussed at the Audit and Performance Committees.

There were no other matters raised under any other business.

123/7 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 19 June 2019 at 10am in Optima.