

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B142/1.46

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 27 JANUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Tuesday 14 December 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
- * ██████████
- * Ms C Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government
- * ██████████, SQA Sponsorship Team, Scottish Government
- * Mr M Ware, Head of Research, Policy, Standards and Statistics

* Indicates present on the call

1 OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Clare Hicks, the new Director of Education Reform, who would be observing from the Scottish Government and ██████████ from the SQA Sponsor Team within Scottish Government, as an observer. He noted that apologies had been received from Grahame Smith.

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 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 Chief Executive provided an update to the Board on developments with the Omicron variant, noting that the Cabinet Secretary had written to Local Authorities at the end of the previous week highlighting a number of measures schools should take, including contingencies that were agreed and announced in August 2021. SQA had also issued communications to the system, aligned with Scottish Government and COSLA communications. The Chief Executive noted that further information was expected from the First Minister later that day, but the general message appeared to be a commitment to schools remaining open where possible and exams taking place.

The Chief Executive reported that, following discussion with the Scottish Government, including Ministerial consideration, SQA would release guidance on standards along with further detail on appeals and exceptional circumstances, when finalised with the Board.

The Chief Executive provided some high-level detail on the results of the 2021 SQA People Survey which had had been issued to the organisation on Friday. Further detail and an action plan would be brought to the Performance Committee for input and thereafter to the Board.

The Board thanked the Chief Executive for the update and the Chair commended the Executive Team for their work through a most challenging year.

1.3 Awarding 2022 Update

██████████ provided an update on the Awarding 2022 Programme, including key dates, issues and risks noting that the overall programme status was at amber.

██████████ noted that, following the last update to the Board, there had been key activity underway across 4 sub-programmes which would be critical to informing downstream delivery. Other delivery definition activity underway included main diet validation activity and the running and testing of main systems and operations which were in the final stages of testing.

The Board thanked [REDACTED] for the clear and comprehensive picture of the current position. The Board discussed resourcing and prioritisation, noting the work being undertaken to underpin current resource.

The Board noted the position.

1.4 PRS+ and Expectational Circumstances

Mr Ware, Head of Research, Policy, Standards and Statistics, presented the paper to the Board, supported by a presentation. Mr Ware provided an overview of the key elements of exceptional circumstances and PRS (post results services), including key risks and asks of the system.

The Board thanked Mr Ware for the presentation, agreeing the general direction of travel and additional support required by learners in 2022. The Board took assurance that the NQ 2022 Group, supported the approach.

The Board discussed the associated risks and suggested mitigating actions, considering the implications to the entire system.

Members agreed that that, on balance, this approach gave weight to the learner experience in a challenging year.

The Board broadly supported the plan as presented, noting the importance of whole system support, and clarity of responsibility across the system, to assist delivery.

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the meeting and throughout the year. He closed the meeting by wishing all members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and noted the Board would meet again on Thursday 27 January 2022.