

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 27 NOVEMBER 2019**

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-sixth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10.00 am on Wednesday 9 October 2019, in Lowden.

**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

\* indicates present

**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 L McGrath, SQA
- Mr S Borley, SQA
- Ms C MacKenzie, Scottish Government

**126/1 CLOSED SESSION**

The formal meeting of the Board was prefaced with a closed session between Board members, the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team.

**126/2 OPENING REMARKS****2.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair extended a welcome to all members including Ms Liz McGrath, Head of Qualifications Portfolio Management, deputising for Dr Gill Stewart, Mr Alan Dickson, Head of Finance, deputising for Ms Linda Ellison and Mr Steve Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance, deputising for Ms Maidie Cahill.

Ms Catriona MacKenzie from the Scottish Government was welcomed as an observer.

Apologies had been received from Ms Cahill, Ms Ellison and Dr Stewart.

**2.11 Declaration of Any Conflicts of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

**2.12 Minutes of meeting held on 21 August 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2019 were approved as an accurate record subject to a small addition to 125/1.3 around the resolution of the industrial dispute. It was agreed that the Board would

have an opportunity to engage in a more detailed strategic discussion around people issues at a future meeting.

#### **2.13 Matters Arising**

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

#### **2.14 Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

#### **2.15 Workplan 2019**

The Board noted the contents of the workplan.

The Chief Executive highlighted that she intended to prepare a proposal for the strategy session at the Board meeting of 27 November and would welcome any suggestions from members of the Board.

It was noted that the Assurance Mapping project was on track and would go to the next meeting of the Audit Committee before coming back to the Board at a future meeting.

### **2.2 CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair's SQA engagements included his attendance at Advisory Council, the Qualifications Committee and various meetings with the Chief Executive. He had, along with the Chief Executive and Ms Handley; SQA Board member, been a part of the judging panel for the 'Pride o Worth' Award that would be presented at the SQA Star Awards in November, and commented on the impressive calibre of the nominations for this year's award.

The Chair had also attended and made presentation at the SQA Long Service Awards. This had been a memorable occasion, marking and rewarding dedicated members of staff for their service to SQA.

The Board noted the update.

### **2.3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented a full update on her activities since the last meeting of the Board, starting with an update on post results day activities. She noted the wider work going on to garner a full understanding of what results are telling us and using course reports to inform intelligence on subjects.

The Chief Executive noted that, following SQA's appearance in September, there had been a follow up letter from the Education and Skills Committee, to which a response would be issued by SQA shortly. Follow up letters had also been sent to individual MSPs.

Following the announcement of the senior phase review, SQA would be working with Education Scotland, Scottish Government and ADES to ensure

a considered and collaborative approach to the review. The Deputy First Minister had confirmed that changes to qualifications would not be the focus of the review.

The Chief Executive also updated the Board on her positive programme of engagement with colleagues across the organisation, with weekly blog updates on the SQA intranet and the commencement of 'huddles' with staff; to provide a more informal setting to update on work and priorities, whilst encouraging a wider two-way dialogue.

The Board welcomed the update, commending especially the work around staff engagement. It was noted that the SQA People Survey was live and would run for the duration of the month, responses to this would give a clearer picture on general feeling throughout the organisation and would be shared with the Board for further discussion once collated.

## 126/3 PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Financial Performance Report Period 5

Mr Dickson, Head of Finance, presented the Financial Performance Report to 31 August 2019, noting that the Budget and Monitoring letter from the Scottish Government for financial year 2019-20 had been received. At present, the funding allocated does not meet SQA requirements to meet the ministerial priorities for the financial year, which is recognised within the letter.

SQA are in the process of completing a mid-year forecast (Quarter 2) for financial year 2019-20 with some financial pressures emerging within both revenue and capital expenditure. As part of this work, Finance colleagues are working with the business to review how expenditure can be reprioritised to remain within the projected funding, however early discussions have been opened with Scottish Government colleagues around the possible requirement of additional capital funding.

The Board noted the update, noting the effect of reduced entries in the college sector on the income to the organisation, with the widening access programme, more students are now choosing to going on to University instead of continuing with HND in year 2. The Board acknowledged the ongoing efforts across the business to address budgetary issues and it was agreed that members would be briefed on any further developments.

### 3.2 Q2 Update

The Board noted that this item had been covered off in the closed discussion session as a verbal update and no paper would be tabled.

### 3.3 Certification 2019 – Lessons Learned

Ms Blair, Director of Operations, presented the Certifications Lessons Learned report and supporting informational slides to the Board.

During 2018-19, two cross-directorate lessons learned exercises had been undertaken to identify actions to improve service delivery. These actions had been monitored on a monthly basis at National Qualifications Certification

Programme Group (CPG) which meets weekly to oversee August certification and provides high level updates on progress at each meeting of the Board.

Ms Blair highlighted the improvements detailed within the report that had been implemented in 2018/2019, including:

- A video conferencing pilot, to facilitate the visiting assessment of Advanced Higher Gaidhlig Performance and address issues with arrangements for low volume but geographically wide centres, ensuring the availability of Visiting Assessors to assess candidate performance;
- New management information and procedures for gathering requirements for markers' meetings and securing accommodation for meetings;
- A pilot for four subjects using webinars to support marker briefings to reduce teacher release requirements and costs. A more extensive pilot involving almost 1000 markers across a broader range of subjects will be implemented in 2019/20;
- A helpdesk to support the e-marking of external assessments has resulted in a service level improvement of 23% (70% to 93%) from the 2018 diet; and
- Piloting of digital upload of verification materials for a limited number of centres presenting candidates in Urdu and German and for recording and storing of visiting examining assessments in modern languages.

Opportunities that had been identified for improvement looking forward to 2019/2020 included:

- Additional training and support for 'C' markers in order to retain within the team;
- Review of visiting examining resource to ensure sufficient reserves and to reduce over-reliance on retiring Visiting Assessors;
- Further improvements to the internal assessment of quality assurance to improve the uplift of assessment materials from centres;
- Greater use of management information to support decisions on script throughput rates for markers, marking team hierarchies and choice of marking models;
- Refinements to coursework assessment specifications in light of centre malpractice; and
- Further work to address the increased volume of late requests for adapted question papers.

Next steps for this work would entail the execution of the Lessons Learned action plan and continued monitoring and identification of further improvements during the course of the year with regular progress reporting to the Board.

Ms Blair highlighted that, following the announcement of the change in date for the Public Holiday in May 2020, the examination timetable was reworked to accommodate. SQA had received assurance from the Scottish Government that this would not present an issue across local authorities but the Board should be assured that SQA would be taking sensible measures to test this assurance by engaging with ADES and other organisations.

The Board welcomed the report commenting on the insight that this work provides into the volume of work that goes on across the organisation throughout the year in preparation for results day.

### 3.4 **Managing Risk – incorporating discussion on the Corporate Risk Register**

Mr Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance, delivered a presentation providing an overview of risk management and a review of SQA's risk appetite matrix.

Under current processes, the Board of Management and Audit Committee set and agree the organisation's risk appetite matrix. This allows the Executive Management Team and Heads of Service throughout the business to use the matrix to identify and assess risks, undertake responses to risks then review and update the relevant risk registers.

Mr Borley presented the proposed new risk appetite matrix, covering the categories of delivery, financial, people and reputation. Using this differing approach will allow more joined up thinking and allow risks and opportunities to be captured more accurately.

To further align with ISO9001 it is proposed that the organisation move to a 'risk environment', allowing the additional capture of issues; from 'potential' to 'actual' and also opportunities. Regular re-assessment of the 'risk environment' will ensure that everything is scored and categorised correctly

The Board welcomed the full and informative presentation and agreed that they would feed thoughts on the proposed risk appetite matrix back to Mr Borley directly in order for the work to continue moving forward. It was agreed that this programme of work would be brought back to the Board for further update and discussion in early 2020, with a review by the Audit Committee for discussion in the interim.

#### 126/4 **PAPERS FOR APPROVAL**

*It was noted that there were no papers for approval at this meeting of the Board.*

#### 126/5 **PAPERS FOR INFORMATION**

##### 5.1 **Data Protection and Information Security**

At the meeting of the Board in June 2019, it was highlighted that it would be helpful for members to receive an update on Data Protection and Information Security, following the introduction of the renewed General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Through the introduction of GDPR, three new rights have been added and all other data protection rights strengthened.

In the context of SQA business, threats exist to information security that are both cyber and non-cyber. The defence to these threats is built on teamwork between Business Systems and Information Governance colleagues and bolstered by compliance and vigilance from colleagues across the organisation.

During 2019, information governance colleagues ran a series of very successful information security events run for staff. These events provided an

overview of obligations and good practice and were well received by all staff who attended who found the sessions valuable and informative.

Following the implementation of GDPR requirements, SQA continue to monitor the effects to ensure legal obligations continue to be met. A layered approach to information security ensures that information held by SQA is protected and there are robust procedures in place to report and address any incidents.

The Board welcomed the update and requested that the presentation be circulated to members by email following the meeting.

## **5.2 Qualifications Delivery**

### **5.21 NQ Certification Programme**

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

### **5.22 HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme**

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

## **5.3 Cash Position**

The Board noted the position for the year based on the 2019-20 Q0 accruals forecast, accepting it as an assurance on the current position.

## **5.4 Advisory Council Memorandum of Understanding**

Ms Handley, convenor of the Advisory Council, presented the Memorandum of Understanding for the Board to note, highlighting that it would be published once approved by Scottish Government colleagues.

## **5.5 Committee Reports**

### **5.51 Audit Committee – 29 July 2019**

The Board 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.

### **5.52 Performance Committee – 5 August 2019**

The Board 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.

### **5.53 Advisory Council – 2 September 2019**

Ms Handley provided a verbal update of the business of the Advisory Council at their latest meeting, noting that the minutes would be included in the papers for the next meeting of the Board.

**5.54 Qualifications Committee – 18 September 2019**

Dr Thomson provided a verbal update of the business of the Qualifications Committee at their latest meeting, noting that the minutes would be included in the papers for the next meeting of the Board.

**5.55 Accreditation Committee – 24 September 2019**

Mr Stewart provided a verbal update of the business of the Accreditation Committee at their latest meeting, noting that the minutes would be included in the papers for the next meeting of the Board.

Mr Stewart highlighted that the Committee had expressed a wish to have sight of the Corporate Risk register but were conscious that some sections would not be appropriate to share. Mr Stewart would discuss further with Mr Borley to establish if this was a viable possibility.

**126/6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no other matters raised under any other business.

**126/7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 27 November 2019 at 10am. The meeting would be held at an external venue and would be confirmed to Board members in due course.