

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 21 MAY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 2 pm on Thursday 14 May 2020 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
- * Ms J Ross
- * Dr G Stewart
- * Mrs D Mahmoud

Observers

- Ms A Kerr, Committee Manager
- Mr R Quinn, Head of Service
- Mr M Ware, Head of Service

* Indicates present on the call

1 OPENING REMARKS**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

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 Craig, Ms Davis and Mr Hagney had children studying at National 5 and 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 previous meeting

The minutes of the Board meeting on 7 May 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

1.13 Matters Arising

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

2 DIET 2020**2.1 Alternative Certification Model**

The proposed ACM had been supported by the Advisory Council and endorsed by the Qualifications Committee at its meetings of 6 May. Dr Stewart provided an outline of the headline messages that had been received, along with the work in train to address this feedback, in particular that:

- Further statistical work was underway, and additional resources had been secured to take this work forward.
- SQA was exploring the feasibility and how best to approach a professional dialogue with centres and/or authorities where anomalous estimates are identified within the time available. Two approaches were under investigation, the first in which centres were asked to submit a brief narrative with their estimates to explain any that they were aware as being anomalous and the second in which a dialogue would be initiated when SQA identified anomalous estimates through its moderation process. Whilst the potential benefits of some form of dialogue was clear, it would take time from what is already a very limited period available to SQA for review and moderation of estimates. It also risked raising issues of equity as it may be difficult for SQA to ensure that any dialogue took place in a way that was fair to all centres. The Board noted the consideration of the issues to date and that there would be further advice.
- A commitment to transparency, but also a wish to ensure documents were published at the appropriate time in this process. It was in the best interests of learners, if teachers and lecturers only made estimate decisions based purely on their professional judgement and their strong understanding of how their learners have performed and, based on their experience and the evidence available, what a learner would be expected to achieve in each course. The Board agreed that this judgement should not be influenced by the moderation - or post certification - processes which follow, and that further communication should be taken forward after 29 May.

The Board fully endorsed the three-stage approach to moderation and awarding being taken forward.

The Board noted that further guidance on freestanding NQ units and internally assessed courses would be provided to centres in due course when it was available.

2.2 **Post Certification Review (PCR)**

Mr Quinn advised that the PCR process had been supported by the Advisory Council and endorsed by the Qualifications Committee at its meetings of 6 May.

One theme coming through had related to the symmetric approach - that grades could go up or down - and concern around the potential that presented for candidates or groups of candidates to be downgraded. SQA's view was that, as an awarding body, it must maintain fairness and certificate candidates based on evidence. It would therefore be remiss of SQA not to act on evidence submitted in the PCR process including, in theory, a downgrade. The Board discussed a range of views around symmetry and downgrading and it was agreed that SQA would consider communications sensitively given that instances were likely to be very rare, if at all.

Another topic of interest had centred on the mechanism for candidates to challenge their centre's estimated grade. Any challenge from a candidate about centre estimates was a matter between the candidate and the centre. In discussion around the timing of publication of the PCR process, it was agreed that there was merit in SQA providing reassurances to the system, but that any publication should be delayed until after the estimates deadline. Given the importance of estimates this year, it was right that the system concentrated on the estimation process, and for SQA's focus to remain on helping teachers and lecturers with that. In conclusion, the Board approved the proposed policy approach for the new Post Certification Review service for 2020.

3 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (CRR)

The Board were content to note the current position of the Corporate Risk Register as presented, acknowledging that it would be kept under review in advance of presentation to the Audit Committee on 1 June. Any comments in the meantime, should be directed to Mr Baxter.

4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Diet 2021

In light of the current press coverage on the 2021 examination diet, the Board was assured that preparations were underway, and that it would be a matter for a more substantial Board discussion shortly.

5 PAPERS FOR NOTING

5.1 Letter from Education and Skills Committee

The Chief Executive highlighted the main areas of information that had been requested following SQA's Committee appearance on Friday 1 May and advised that a full response was being collated for return.

The Chief Executive also took the opportunity to update the Board on recent correspondence between SQA and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The Chair thanked members for their time and input and noted the Board would meet again on 21 May 2020.