

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 30 APRIL 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 2 pm on Thursday 23 April 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

* Indicates present on the call

1 OPENING REMARKS**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members and noted apologies from Ms Craig and Dr Stewart.

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 meeting held on:**i 2 April 2020**

The minutes of the Board meeting on 2 April 2020 were approved.

ii 9 April 2020

The minutes of the Board meeting on 9 April 2020 were approved subject to typographical matters.

iii 16 April 2020

The minutes of the Board meeting on 16 April 2020 were approved.

1.13 Matters Arising

Chair's Remarks

The Chair thanked members for their prompt responses to the virtual approval of the co-opted appointments to the Qualifications Committee. The consent of the Board was recorded formally. He was pleased to advise that the invitation letters had been duly issued and accepted.

Chief Executive's Update - Diet 2020

The Chief Executive provided an update to the Board since its last meeting. The Guidance on Estimates had been issued to centres as planned on 20 April, alongside further detail on the awarding model. Key stakeholders had been consulted and were supportive of the approach being taken. ADES guidance had also been issued to encourage schools to apply a data protection exemption to any request for candidate estimates in advance of 4 August.

She also updated that work continued towards finalisation of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). The ACM and post-certification appeals system would be considered by the SQA Code of Practice Governance Group (COPGG) early in the following week, and the outputs of this work would be brought to the Board through the Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee.

In parallel, work was progressing through the detail of HNVQ arrangements, particularly in relation to subject specific guidance and regulated qualifications. Further communications, to remind centres of entry dates for National 3 and National 4 entries, would also issue shortly.

The Chief Executive reported that SQA had been working positively with UCAS and Colleges Scotland to engage with Universities and Colleges. Other collaborative work had included engagement with the National Parent Forum and Young Scot.

In closing her remarks, the Chief Executive highlighted to the Board that she had been invited to appear before the Education and Skills Committee on Friday 1 May.

The Board thanked the Chief Executive for the update.

In discussion, it was further highlighted that SQA Accreditation was continuing to engage with awarding bodies and work was being undertaken around the sustainability of employers and training providers in the current climate. SQA Awarding was also working with Skills Development Scotland to provide support around apprenticeships, in particular for Foundation Apprenticeships.

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

1.2 IT CAPABILITIES

Mr Downie, Director of Business Systems, provided the Board with a verbal update regarding the different workstreams being supported by Business Systems to enable the organisation to continue with business as usual (BAU) throughout the current period. Mechanisms were in place to monitor delivery against five Key Performance Indicators, which were currently reporting at green with the exception of an increased risk around cyber security that was being closely monitored.

Regarding support for the ACM, Mr Downie reported that Business Systems colleagues were firmly embedded in the workstreams and that regular progress reporting was in place. A clear ranking matrix across all activity had been established to ensure resources for the ACM workstreams were prioritised. He outlined the five potential risk categories that had been identified and provided the Board with assurance that mitigating actions were in place to address these.

The Board commended the work of Business Systems in providing the ongoing technical support to certification, BAU, and the mobilisation of all colleagues to be able to work remotely throughout this period.

1.3 **INTERNATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL UPDATE**

Mr McMorris, Director of Business Development, provided the Board with a verbal update on the position of business development activity in all key markets under the current circumstances.

Reporting some obvious challenges as well as a number of opportunities across both the UK and international markets, it was understood that clarity would come through as the economic situation developed and settled.

The Board noted the position and thanked Mr McMorris for the update.

1.4 **FINANCE**

4.1 **2019-20 Financial Performance to 29 February 2020**

Mr Baxter, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, presented the forecast outturn for the period ending 29 February 2020 compared to the Quarter 3 (Q3) forecast position. This was noted by the Board.

It was reported that the impact of COVID-19 was beginning to emerge in the current outturn position, specifically on income and cost base. It was also expected that expenditure incurred in March would reduce further from that projected as a result of reduced travel and the impact of lockdown on SQA operations. Finance colleagues had continued to engage closely with Scottish Government on these matters and the issues faced were commonplace across many public bodies at this time. It was confirmed that there were no additional pressures anticipated in Financial Year 2019-20 as a result of COVID-19 related issues.

Mr Baxter then referred to the comparative year on year budget figures that had been included in response to a request of the Board. These figures reflected the movements between Q3 2019-20 and the baseline position in 2020-21. Mr McKay, Convenor of the Audit Committee, had had early sight of the paper, and having had clarification on the classification of staff costs, was content to note the report.

The Board noted the report.

4.2 **Cash Position**

The Board noted the cash position as presented.

5 **QUALIFICATIONS DELIVERY**

5.1 **NQ Certification Programme**

The Board noted the report and the assurances that those factors reported at amber were under control and being actively managed.

5.2 **HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme**

The Board noted the report and the assurances that those factors reported at amber were under control and being actively managed.

The Chair thanked members for their time and input and noted the Board would meet again on 30 April 2020.