

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 9 JULY 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1.45 pm on Thursday 25 June 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

* Indicates present on the call

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 M Ware, Head of Transformational Change

1 OPENING REMARKS**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting including Martyn Ware, Head of Transformational Change. He noted that apologies had been received from Dr Mayne.

The Board joined the Chair in noting their congratulations to Mr Smith on his imminent retirement from his post as General Secretary of the Scottish Trade Unions Congress.

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 11 June 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

1.13 Matters Arising**BE13/3 ACM Update**

The Board noted that the Chief Executive had written to members of the Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee, outlining SQA's decision on dialogue with centres.

The Board discussed the Deputy First Minister's statement of that week, regarding a presumption of a full return to school on 11 August, should the public health advice allow. It was noted that whilst this would lessen the immediate pressures on SQA regarding the 2021 Diet, it did not detract from the significant challenges to delivering assessments in 2021. SQA, together with partners in Scottish education as part of the Education Recovery Group, would continue to explore options for consideration.

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

2 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided her update as part of item 3.

3 SQA'S ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION MODEL 2020 - UPDATE

The Chief Executive delivered a presentation to the Board providing an update and detail on SQA's Alternative Certification Model (ACM) for 2020; decision points that had passed; and further decision points where work was underway.

As part of that, Dr Stewart provided an overview of the planned technical approach to moderation based on the principles of fairness to all learners; safe and secure certification; and maintenance of the integrity and credibility of the qualifications system. The approach would use optimisation as a recognised method for identifying the best possible solution to meet stated objectives according to defined constraints. Mr Downie provided the Board with assurances that specific data ownership and data protection clauses had been written into the contracts with the external partners that had been engaged to assist in the data analysis.

The Board took further assurance from the Executive that a full Equality Impact Assessment continued to be developed across the end to end process, which would be published on results day. The Board noted that the current considerations looked at centres without prejudice and that SQA would be in a position to provide further analysis following Results Day.

In closing, the Chief Executive reported that the overall programme of work was on track and that National Awarding Meetings would begin the following week.

The Board thanked officers for the update, noting the complexity of the task, its time constraints and challenges. The Board engaged in a wide-ranging discussion, acknowledging that the estimates SQA had received from centres presented challenges for moderation. There was full appreciation for the difficult decisions that had to be taken whilst maintaining and ensuring the principle of fairness throughout. On discussing the significance of the Post Certification Review process, it was recognised that volumes could be high in comparison to previous years. In concluding their comments, the Board commended the Executive team for its work in an unprecedented year.

Further work was underway to prepare for results day itself and the Board agreed to discuss further at a future meeting.

In closing the discussion, the Board expressed interest in the opportunity to observe a National Awarding meeting and it was agreed that this would be taken forward.

4 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair thanked members for their time and contribution to the discussions, noting that the Board would meet again on Thursday 9 July 2020.