

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 23 APRIL 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 2.00 pm on Thursday 16 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
- * Ms D Mahmoud

Observers

Ms A Kerr, Committee Manager
Mr R Quinn, Head of English, Languages & Business

* Indicates present on the call

BE05/1 OPENING REMARKS**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members, including Mr Robert Quinn, Head of English, Languages and Business, who would introduce the draft Guidance for Estimates document that had been circulated to the Board ahead of the meeting. The Chair noted that apologies had been received from Dr Thomson.

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 9 April 2020

The Chair noted that the minutes of this meeting were currently in draft form and would be brought to the next meeting of the Board for approval. The Board would continue to meet virtually every Thursday afternoon until further notice. Any issues requiring Board approval not related to the revised arrangements to be adopted following the cancellation of the Diet, would be dealt with in as expeditious a manner as possible and could be discussed at the Thursday meetings if necessary.

1.13 Matters Arising

Chair's Remarks

The Chair advised that the next scheduled formal meeting due to take place on Wednesday 22 April would be cancelled and any business would be covered in the weekly Board meeting on Thursday 23 April.

Regarding the temporary augmentation to the membership of the Qualifications Committee, discussions had ensued between the Chief Executive, Dr Stewart and Dr Thomson, Convenor of the Qualifications Committee. It was intended that formal letters of invitation would be issued to identified candidates at the beginning of the following week.

Chief Executive's Update - Diet 2020

The Chief Executive reported on the sustained work across the organisation to deliver on the current three clear streams of work: guidance on estimates; the alternative certification model; and the post certification appeals system.

The latest draft of guidance for centres on producing estimates had been issued to the Board that day. Following engagement with EIS, ADES, SCIS and SLS, initial comments had been received and had been in the main, positive, well received and generally focused on matters of presentation.

The Chief Executive provided an update on work that continued apace on refining the detail of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). It was highlighted that whilst SQA was acutely aware that the system was eager to know the detail of the approach going forward, it was equally conscious of the need to afford proper consideration of the critical and operational elements that would underpin the model to ensure safe and secure delivery.

Moving on to the development of an Appeals Process, the Chief Executive noted that good progress was being made and SQA officers continued to refine the process in tandem with the ACM. This work, including the ACM, would be brought before the Board following input from the Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee.

Work had also continued in the HNVQ sector, and colleagues were working through the matters in hand, with support from Colleges Scotland.

The Chief Executive also informed the Board that the Head of SQA Accreditation had issued guidance and initial advice on accredited qualifications to all awarding bodies, including SQA. There was a need for further engagement in this area, especially in relation to competency-based qualifications.

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

SQA INFORMATION ON PRODUCING ESTIMATES

Mr Quinn presented the SQA Information on Producing Estimates document that had been circulated to the Board in its draft form ahead of the meeting.

The guidance covered the requirement for teachers and lecturers in 2020 to use an extended band scale, linked to the existing scale and to rank order their learners within each band. Teachers and lecturers were best placed to have a strong understanding of how their learners had performed and, based on their experience and the evidence available, what a learner would be expected to achieve in each course.

It was stressed that an estimated grade should not only be attributed to the result of one prelim or one project for example but should reflect an overall judgement based on activity across the year.

Engagement with approximately 50 teachers and other stakeholders had been conducted throughout the development of the guidance, and further engagement and refinements would continue. These collaborative discussions had been positive, and all feedback had contributed to the shaping of the final document. In tandem, an SQA Academy (online training) course would be developed to provide additional guidance, hints, tips and practical examples. It was suggested that this should include access for Heads of Centre also.

The Board welcomed sight of the document, supporting it as a clear, concise and practicable guide. The detail would serve to ensure that Heads of Centres, SQA Co-ordinators, curriculum leaders, teachers and lecturers were aware of the enhanced requirements for 2020, in order to generate and submit the required information to SQA.

It was noted that the process of sharing estimates from previous years had begun with individual centres and that this would serve to strengthen their estimating processes in 2020. Regarding existing assessments that might already be held unmarked by centres, it was clarified that, while there was no formal requirement to undertake the marking for SQA, centres would be free to consider it as an inclusion in the totality of available evidence.

The Board discussed the issues around the sharing of estimates under the new process. The Chief Executive highlighted the role of centres as data controllers and separate advice to schools was being considered by the Scottish Government.

In closing, the Board said it would be helpful to have sight of the timeline of further guidance to the system. It was advised that a high-level overview of the process would be issued alongside the guidance, on publication.

The Board thanked Mr Quinn for his contribution, noting also its appreciation to all involved in the development of the guidance.

The Chair thanked members for the full and valuable discussion and noted that the Board would meet again on Thursday 23 April.