

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 23 APRIL 2020**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 2.30 pm on Thursday 9 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

**BE04/1 OPENING REMARKS****1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members and welcomed Mrs Mahmoud, Director of People, to her first meeting of the Board. Apologies were noted from Mr Smith and Mr Downie.

**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 meetings held on:****i 16 March 2020**

The Board noted that the comparative budget figures would be provided to the Board in due course.

**ii 26 March 2020**

There were a couple of minor drafting points.

**1.13 Matters Arising**

The Chief Executive provided an update on the communications that had been published on 2 April around National 5 Coursework and the

approach to estimates, and then the joint statement with Colleges Scotland that had been published the following day. These had been well received by the system.

The Chief Executive went on to highlight SQA's next tranche of immediate priorities. Firstly, to develop further guidance to schools and colleges by 20 April, on how to determine and submit refined estimate information. This would be supported by a broader public message about SQA's approach to delivering results. Secondly, to finalise the detail of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). And lastly, to develop the process for the appeals system, which would be brought to the Board in due course. The Qualifications Development directorate would take forward the policy aspect of this work, in collaboration with the Operations directorate to ensure that the operational competence to underpin these processes was in place. Business Systems was also closely involved, to assess system deliverability.

The Board welcomed the update, supporting SQA in its management and delivery of the communications, which had been positively received in centres by both teachers and learners.

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

## **1.2 APPROACH TO SECURING APPROPRIATE ASSURANCE OF THE MODEL FOR USE IN 2020 TO DETERMINE ENTITLEMENT OF GRADED NATIONAL COURSES FOR CANDIDATES, IN THE ABSENCE OF PERFORMANCE DATA**

Board members were referred to the paper that had been circulated to them ahead of the meeting.

Mr Baxter, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, presented the paper outlining the proposed strategy to secure appropriate assurance over our approaches to determining the entitlement of candidates to Graded National Courses in Diet 2020, in the absence of actual pupil performance data.

The approach before the Board had been agreed in principle at its meeting of 26 March 2020. Its development had been closely aligned to Scottish Government's Assurance Framework, which was based on the "three lines of defence model" and was used widely across the public sector.

The Chief Executive explained that the proposed three lines of defence approach to assurance would seek to balance internal and external sources of assurance, involving appropriate stakeholders and expertise to provide advice and assurance on the revised certification model whilst minimising the risk of challenge to the proposed approach. The approach proposed would seek to respond to an unprecedented set of circumstances in an appropriate and robust way, seeking input and assurance at each key stage of the development and delivery of the model.

The Board welcomed the paper and fully endorsed the deployment of the three lines of defence approach.

Board members recognised that, given the pace of development, the role of internal and external audit would be considered in the medium term rather than supporting the immediate decision-making process.

Members agreed that the Board would continue to play a strong and direct role through weekly meetings and that the Qualifications Committee would be augmented with appropriate additional expertise in order to provide support and strong technical advice to the Board. This would be taken forward by the Chair of the Qualifications Committee and agreed by the Board in due course. It was agreed that the Advisory Council would be engaged and consulted in an advisory capacity to garner views from the represented organisations within its membership. The Board agreed that the Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee should meet in early May, to provide advice on the details of the certification and appeals.

### 1.3 APPLICATION OF FAIR WORK FRAMEWORK DURING COVID-19

Mrs Mahmoud, Director of People, presented a paper to the Board intended to offer assurance that SQA adhered to the Fair Work Framework (FWF) principles during the Covid-19 crisis. The paper also shared information intended for submission to the Scottish Government in response to their request to all public sector bodies for supporting evidence of adherence to FWF.

Mrs Mahmoud noted that SQA's response to Covid-19 would be shared with the Unions ahead of submission to the Scottish Government.

The Board welcomed the paper, stating that its content was clear and appropriate, and members supported sight of SQA working alongside these principles. There was particular credit paid to the learning and development plan referenced in the paper.

In discussion, Mrs Mahmoud highlighted that SQA was working through the position for different categories of appointees with respect to their contractual status as, whilst for some appointees, there would be no activities for them to undertake, that was not the case for all appointees. The Chief Executive had written to appointees personally following the announcement that the 2020 exam diet would not go ahead and with an assurance that SQA was fully committed to supporting them through these challenges. It had been hard to be able to announce anything definitive in the current uncertainties, but they had been advised that their help and expertise might be needed to support other activities, pre and post results. SQA would keep appointees engaged as the situation developed, ensuring its approach would be in line with other UK awarding bodies.

The Board suggested that it would be useful to have a sense of the extent to which Covid-19 was affecting the appointees' group across the board.

In closing, the Chair thanked the Board and the Executive Management Team for their input and noted that the Board would continue to meet through this forum on a weekly basis until further notice.