

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 6 DECEMBER 2017

For approval

Minutes of the one hundred and twelfth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10 am on Wednesday 4 October 2017 in Arrol, Lowden.

**Members**

- \* Mr D Middleton (Chair)
- \* Dr J Brown (Chief Executive)
- \* Ms E Craig
- \* Mr S Hagny
- \* Mrs J Handley
- \* Dr W Mayne
- \* Mr H McKay
- \* Mr R O'Hare
- \* Mr R Stewart
- \* Dr P Thomson
- \* Ms C Wilkinson

\* indicates present

**Officers**

- \* Ms J Blair
- \* Ms M Cahill
- \* Mr L Downie
- \* Ms L Ellison
- \* Mr J McMorris
- \* Ms J Ross
- \* Dr G Stewart
- Mr Ware, item 112/11 only
- Mr Borley, item 112/13 only

**Observer**

- \* Ms A Stansfield, Scottish Government

112/1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair extended a welcome to members to his first meeting of the SQA Board of Management. He took the opportunity to acknowledge the support he had received thus far from the Chief Executive, SQA Directors and Scottish Government.

The Chair advised that the meeting would conclude with a private session of the Board.

112/2 **DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no conflicts of interest raised.

112/3 **PREVIOUS MEETING**i **Minutes of meeting held on 17 August 2017**

111/12 Corporate Business System Progress Report and Approval for Phase 3

To reflect more comprehensively the comfort that had been provided to Board members during its consideration of the CBS project, it was agreed to complement the minute with the following script:

*“As already reported, to mitigate the core risk of insufficient staff resources, an exercise was underway to prioritise projects alongside the introduction of a more informed approach to capacity planning.”*

This addition would echo the direct assurances provided on the proposed enhanced processes supporting the project on capacity planning and resource prioritisation.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved as an accurate record.

ii **Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted, and that there were no outstanding issues.

112/4 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

112/5 **CHAIR'S REMARKS**

The Chair reported that his early weeks at SQA had included a number of meetings with the Chief Executive and attendance at the Accreditation Committee and Qualifications Committee meetings. He had also undertaken several separate induction sessions with members of the Board and the Executive Management Team, and had introductory discussions with the Deputy First Minister and Director of Learning, Scottish Government.

The Chair had also attended, along with the Chief Executive, the Deputy First Minister's Keynote Speech at the SLF, and the Colleges Scotland Parliamentary Reception. The Chair and Chief Executive had also met with the Deputy First Minister on 27 September.

He looked forward to attending the SQA Long Services Awards in Edinburgh later that week.

The Board noted the update.

112/6 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented a full update on her activities since the last meeting of the Board and took the opportunity to update members on SQA's work in delivering to the Scottish Government Fair Work Framework. Having examined how SQA policies and practices compared with the Framework principles, it had been decided to enhance opportunities that SQA staff had to participate in various business consultations. Some very encouraging work was now underway to develop a vehicle to capture a representative staff voice and to engage staff in wider consultation – especially in those areas that had an impact on employees. SQA was taking a strong lead in this work in the public body arena and the work of Ms Cahill and her team was commended by the Board.

She also drew attention to the wide spread reporting of SQA's recently published second Fieldwork Report on National Course design and assessment over 2016-17, where coverage had focussed particularly on National 4.

Following on from discussion on the Chief Executive's recent appearance at the Education and Skills Committee, and on the matter of returning examination scripts, it was confirmed that an internal review on access to scripts was underway and would be considered by the Qualifications Committee in due course. The project would scope how other awarding bodies in the UK carried out this exercise, and consider

operational aspects and challenges, compliance with GDPR, and any potential impact on schools. Ultimately, the work would move into broader engagement with stakeholders.

The Board noted the content of the Chief Executive's Report.

## 112/7 QUALIFICATIONS

### i Revised National Qualifications (RNQ) Update

Dr Stewart presented an update on the RNQ Programme, and was pleased to report that the status of the overall programme remained at green.

Referring to the work of the previous three months, the Board remarked on the notable achievement in completing and publishing the National 5 documentation to milestone.

It was planned to issue a communication to Headteachers and Stakeholders summarising the publication of the schedule for Higher Revisions.

Work ahead included:

- Drawing up detailed plans for the revisions of Higher; initial thinking on timelines was very much in line with those of National 5.
- Revision of the previous National 5 Units into standalone Units.

Discussing the potential risks and issues associated with delivering the RNQ programme, the Board noted that the Scottish Government decision to retain Recognising Positive Achievement (fallback) for a further year but only for a small number of candidates in "exceptional circumstances", could have an unintended impact on candidate and teacher workload. The Board and SQA officers reiterated their commitment to remain cognisant of workload for teachers and pupils whilst maintaining the standards and credibility of the qualifications. It was also mentioned that discussions were underway with the Scottish Government around scoping the approach to the review of National 4, and again, it was stressed that the adoption of any further policy changes would need careful consideration of the impact both on deliverability and cost on not just SQA, but the wider system.

The development of the 2018 timetable had been exceptionally challenging as it has been necessary to accommodate inclusion of examinations for some National 5 courses for the first time and to extend examination time to accommodate changes to assessment as a consequence of the removal of unit assessments. The Board noted that the Executive took care that examinations were ordered and spread throughout the examination period to consider coincident and workload issues for candidates. With the strengthening of Course Assessments for National 5, the Board was assured that a full and robust equality impact assessment had also been undertaken to assess the need for reasonable adjustments or assessment arrangements for candidates.

The Board noted that the magnitude of delivering the mandated changes had resulted in a continued focus on National Qualifications and it was important to ensure other corporate commitments were delivered.

The Board noted the contents of the report and was pleased to note that the programme was on track.

ii **Report from the NQ Certification Programme Group**

Ms Blair, Director of Operations, presented a full update on the National Qualifications Certification Programme Group and was pleased to report, that overall the programmes for certification 2017 and 2018 were on track.

All key tasks leading to the certification of National Qualifications in 2018 were on track and being monitored.

The Board noted the contents of the report, and, as per normal practice, a lessons learned exercise would take place on certification 2017. The findings of this work would be provided to the next meeting of the Board

iii **Report from HN, Vocational and International (HNV/Int) Certification Programme Group**

Ms Blair, Director of Operations, presented the report in detail, highlighting that whilst the development for Vocational Qualifications was reported at green. Risks associated with the changes to the regulatory environment in the Rest of UK and the transition of a number of qualifications to the new regulatory framework were being addressed. The Board was assured that this work was supported by a detailed contingency plan and was being closely monitored.

It was noted that the factor around verification and impact of the college industrial action had been resolved in the time since publication of the Board papers and could now be reported at green.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

112/8 **CORPORATE AND FINANCE**

i **Financial Performance Report**

Mrs Ellison, Director of Finance, presented the year to date position and forecast outturn for the period ending 31 August 2017.

At the end of Period 5, the forecast requirement for additional grant in aid was reported at £19.117m. This decrease from the forecast at Q0 could be attributed to forecast increases in income and reductions in expenditure across the business.

Programme Grant, whilst currently reporting at favourable, could change once the staffing requirements for RNQ were properly identified. This would be clarified further and updated for the Q2 Forecast, which would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

The Board was pleased to note that CBS Phase 1 had gone successfully live at the beginning of that week. It was confirmed that CBS Phase 1 and some elements of CBS Phase 3 costs were reflected in the 2017/18 budget. The

reported CBS Phase 4 cost was in error, with that phase only in planning stages.

The Board noted the financial position as presented and that the Q2 Forecast would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

The Board had also received a comprehensive update on progress with key supplier dealings and commented favourably on the satisfactory conclusion.

ii **Cash Position**

Mrs Ellison Director of Finance, presented the cashflow, provided to the Board as an assurance on the current position on the cash budget.

The Board noted the position for the year based on the 2017-18 Q0 accruals forecast.

112/9 **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Mr McMorris, Director of Business Development, presented the business development activity in all key markets as at 31 August 2017 against the Q0 plan. He also updated the Board on the Q2 position, new contract awards, and potential business opportunities that would be pursued before year end.

The Board noted the contents of the report along with the update on the HN Trademark.

112/10 **CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

Ms Cahill, Director of Corporate services, presented the status of the Corporate Risk Register, highlighting that a closure of one risk would be recommended to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

The Board noted the contents of the Corporate Risk Register.

*Editor's note: In terms of continuity, the agenda was reordered and item 112/12 was considered before presentation of item 112/11.*

112/12 **SQA CHANGE PROGRAMME REPORT**

Mr Downie, Director of Business Systems, presented the update on progress against the various workstreams of the SQA Change Programme.

The Board noted and welcomed the new reporting format that now reflected a logical grouping of the work projects into two functional business areas.

As part of the presentation, the Board noted that:

- The delivery schedule was on track to complete the discovery stages.
- The business was consistently delivering to, and achieving, milestones. The reported missed milestone had been fulfilled since publication of the Board papers.

- Programme budget was on track, with no full year variances identified as at end August 2017; however a risk was attached to securing capital funding for CBS phase 3 and this was being closely managed.
- As reported to the last Board, the work to manage resources was now underway and progressing well. Current focus was centred on project prioritisation taking full consideration of the impact on demand and capacity to ensure alignment of programme delivery to resource availability.

The Board welcomed both the focus on delivery and the collective view of how the Change Programme would feed into, and benefit, SQA as a whole. It was confirmed by the Executive that an overarching piece on the outcomes and benefits of the Programme was being developed, and that it was intended to bring this to the attention of the Board in the coming months.

The Board noted this action along with the contents of the report.

### 112/11 ASSESSMENT FUTURES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SQA

Mr Ware, Head of Assessment Futures, Business Change Programme, was welcomed to the meeting to present a summary of progress and outline the next steps with the Assessment Futures workstream.

Mr Downie introduced the discussion explaining that this strand of work, which was to investigate and identify new ways to assess, had now reached the end of its discovery phase. The findings had raised a number of pertinent questions for SQA, including its role in this new landscape, the importance of developing an effective technology strategy and the criticality of close partnership working in taking this work forward. The Board was agreed that SQA's approach to framing next steps was crucial – and that the ultimate aim was to develop a platform that enabled SQA to respond to change.

During discussion, the Board offered significant advice and guidance, and:

- Fully supported the vision to develop a platform that enabled SQA to act with responsiveness and agility.
- Raised the implications for SQA's workforce/skills mix – and to strive to capture the Young Voice.
- Commented on the need to consider the potential impact on professionals' workloads in the wider education system.
- Highlighted the disparate customer requirements and capacities and as such, the need for different approaches according to the target market.
- Agreed with the collaborative approach and bringing partners on board; it was imperative to ensure extensive engagement, involvement and research with Stakeholders *and* Users.
- Commented on the need to manage the cultural change and for senior management to take lead and champion the benefits.
- Highlighted the broader discussion around transformative learning; keep to the forefront the importance of ensuring the assessment captures what is valued.
- Recommended a pilot of any new approaches to new ways of learning.

In concluding a most informative debate, the Board welcomed the work and encouraged the executive to continue to work with partners in the scoping of further actions.

Mr Ware left the meeting at this point.

## 112/13 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2018-21

Mr Steve Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance, joined the meeting and presented the draft plan that set out SQA's priorities over the period 2018-21 and formed the basis for SQA's annual budget.

The Board discussed both the contents of the draft and the methodology taken in collating the plan, during which:

- the addition of Goal 4 was endorsed;
- it was requested to work on styling the document into a more user friendly and readable format; and
- it was agreed to strengthen the focus on SQA's overarching goal.

The Board commented positively on the notable improvement in the tone of the report before them, and approved the circulation to other SQA Committees for feedback.

It was agreed that, going forward, the method of consultation with Committees should be revisited, considering; digital co-authoring and drafting, building in a better lead time for discussion, and allocating specific goals according to the roles and responsibilities of the Committee.

Mr Borley left the meeting at this point.

## 112/14 COMMITTEE REPORTS

### i **Audit Committee – 31 July 2017**

Mr McKay had updated members on the business of the Audit Committee at the last meeting of the Board.

### ii **International and Commercial Committee – 31 July 2017**

A verbal update had been provided to the previous meeting, and the Board noted the enclosed minutes.

### iii **Qualifications Committee – 17 August 2017**

A verbal update had been provided to the previous meeting, and the Board noted the enclosed minutes.

### iv **Advisory Council – 4 September 2017**

Mr Stewart provided an update on the business of the last meeting, when members had received a presentation on communications and stakeholder engagement. Key advice for the Board from the Advisory Council included:

- There was a collective responsibility to promote and celebrate the successful achievement of SQA qualifications.
- SQA needed to be very clear on the communication requirements of teachers, students and parents and to develop suitable access mechanisms for each.
- Another strong thread coming through had been the need to identify, monitor and handle misinformation/rumours.

- There had been support for SQA as the Assessment and National Qualifications group consult on the changes to National 4, but more importantly, that there be a mature approach, taking the feedback and evidence on board.
- It had been agreed to review the mechanism by which the Advisory Council provided its advice to the SQA Board, with a focus on making it more timely and effective.

The Board noted the update, and that the minutes would be included in the next set of bound papers.

v **Accreditation Committee - 26 September 2017**

Ms Wilkinson updated the Board on the recent meeting, which had included an enthusiastic strategy session and workshop discussing the vision and strategy for the Accreditation Unit.

From the business agenda, there had been discussion around Standards and Frameworks Commissioning, which had highlighted the typical frustrations around meeting timelines and the role of SDS. Debate had also taken place around English Apprenticeships, pointing to clear tensions in the financially driven English approach and the potential for this to affect activity rates in Scotland. A 3 Celtic Nations Group was in the very early stages of development, with the intention to attempt to identify common or similar qualifications and apprenticeships.

The Board noted the update and that the minutes would be included in the next set of bound papers.

vi **Qualifications Committee - 27 September 2017**

Dr Thomson updated the Board on the considerations of the last meeting, which had included a number of detailed and technical papers relating to National Qualifications. The Committee had also received a report on the outcome of the equality review on the revisions made to strengthen the course assessments of Revised National 5 Qualifications. Members too received a very interesting presentation on the analysis of the observed progression information arising from the first few years of the national qualifications, the final document due to be published in due course.

The Board noted the update and that the minutes would be included in the next set of bound papers.

**112/15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no other matters raised.

**112/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on 6 December 2017 in Lowden.

The Directors, Officers and Observer left the meeting, and the Board convened for a private session.