

## SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B153/1.3 iii

### BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 26 APRIL 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 10am on Wednesday  
22 March 2023 in Lowden.

#### Members

- \* Mr D Middleton (Chair)
- \* Ms F Robertson (Chief Executive)
- Ms A Davis
- \* Mr S Hagney
- \* Mrs J Handley
- \* Dr W Mayne
- \* Mr G Smith
- \* Professor K Thomson
- \* Ms M Wailes

#### Officers

- \* Mr M Baxter
- \* Ms J Blair
- \* Mr J Booth
- Mr M Campbell
- \* Mr M Ware
- \* Mrs D Mahmoud
- \* Mr J McMorris
- \* Dr G Stewart

- \* Indicates present

#### In attendance

Mr S Borley, Head of Chief Executive's Office, SQA

[REDACTED], SQA (3.6 only)  
[REDACTED], SQA (3.6 only)  
[REDACTED], SQA  
[REDACTED], SQA

Ms L McGrath, Reform Programme Director, SQA (4.2 only)

[REDACTED], SQA  
[REDACTED], Scottish Government

#### 1 OPENING REMARKS

##### 1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting including [REDACTED] from the Scottish Government who would be observing the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Anna Davis and Martin Campbell.

##### 1.2 Declaration of any conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest raised in relation to the agenda.

### 1.3 **Minutes from previous meetings**

The Chair noted that the minutes of the previous meetings would be brought to the Board meeting on 26 April.

### 1.4 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## 2 **MANAGEMENT UPDATES**

### i **Chief Executive's Update**

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the breadth and depth of work that the organisation continued to deliver, alongside review and reform activity.

The conclusion of the industrial dispute between the Scottish Government, COSLA and the teaching unions was a positive development which would allow SQA to continue to deliver the diet to plan and the Chief Executive noted her thanks to colleagues across the organisation for the huge amount of planning, replanning and contingency work undertaken in recent weeks.

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the review and reform landscape, noting that the Hayward interim report had now been published. At the request of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, she was developing advice on the proposals contained within the stage two report which would be submitted in due course.

The Board noted the update.

### ii **Malpractice Update**

In her role as SQA Responsible Officer, Dr Stewart provided the Board with an update on a case of malpractice that had been raised against a delivering centre in England. Dr Stewart reported on the investigation process and potential implications.

Board members noted a number of potential implications; however it was recognised that further work needed to be done to clarify the extent of these.

Dr Stewart assured the Board that colleagues would continue to update the Qualifications Committee, the Board, and others as appropriate.

The Board noted the update.

## 3 **FOR APPROVAL**

### 3.1 **Budget 2023-24**

Mr Baxter set out the opening budget position for financial year 23-24, including the funding requirement from Scottish Government compared with the level of approved funding from the previous financial year, FY22-23.

Mr Baxter reported that a request for additional grant in aid had been made to the Scottish Government to ensure a fully funded budget position is set at the start of the financial year and SQA awaited a response. The Board noted that subject to this response the budget position was presented as a draft.

The Board approved the budget as set out in the paper.

### **3.2 Annual Business Plan**

Mr Baxter presented the final version of the Annual Business Plan noting that it had been taken through an extensive programme of internal and external engagement and consultation including senior committees and the Advisory Council and gave an overview of the amendments that had been made as a result.

The Board approved the Annual Business Plan, noting that some minor Amendments Would Be Made As Appropriate Closer To Publication.

### **3.3 Arrangements for the Assessment of National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses in Session 2023-2024**

Mr Ware presented the proposed arrangements, inviting the Board to approve the recommendation that for National Courses at National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher the full 2019 course assessment requirements should be reinstated in 2023-2024 with some minor refinements in some subjects, by exception, where there is evidence from awarding to support such refinements.

The Board noted that the proposed approach had been developed in the best interests of learners and had broad support from stakeholder groups, Advisory Council and the Qualifications Committee, with the intention that these arrangements will become the standard approach going forward. The Board discussed the communications element of delivering this update to centres and learners.

Further to this, Mr Ware reported that work was being undertaken around the reported uses and implications of artificial intelligence for assessment and associated risks and opportunities. Some guidance had been provided to centres and learners and SQA was continuing to work with the Joint Council for Qualifications as part of a wider UK approach.

The Board considered the feedback outlined in the paper and approved the proposed approach.

### **3.4 Approach to modifications for 2023-24 in HNVQ**

Mr Ware went on to present the proposed approach for Higher National and vocational qualifications (HNVQ) in 2023/24, noting that a similar approach was being proposed as to national qualifications with a similar programme of engagement having been undertaken. The proposal would take forward aspects of the alternative assessment arrangements which have benefitted the qualifications but remove the decision tree from the process.

The Board approved the approach.

### 3.5 Policy

#### i **Appeals 2023 (PRS) & Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS)**

Mr Ware presented the Appeals 2023 and EECCS policies that had been developed as per the approach approved by the Board 25 January 2023.

The Board noted that both policies had been developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders, were evidence based and reflected the best balance between a range of competing and highly challenging considerations. Both policies had been approved by the Qualifications Committee at their meeting on 8 March.

The Board approved both the Appeals 2023 and the EECCS policies.

#### ii **Contingency Appeals 2023**

Mr Ware went on to present the policy for contingency appeals in 2023, noting that the intention would be to retain the model, as an ongoing contingency position, for National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher and review on an annual basis to determine its viability in the context of each year.

The Board approved the policy.

### 3.6 Draft Equality Mainstreaming Report

The Board were joined by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] presented the Equality Mainstreaming Report and supporting appendices for the period 2021-23, developed to evidence SQA's progress against equality outcomes as per the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

[REDACTED] provided an overview of SQA's Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities and the work that had taken place across SQA to embed equality and meet these obligations. [REDACTED] reported that strong progress had been made against the EHRC Section 23 Agreement which had been captured in the report. An update about SQA's governance model and groups had also been included to illustrate how the Equality Steering Group reports to the Finance and Performance Group and People and Culture Group through clear reporting delegations in order to track progress.

The Board welcomed the report, commending the ongoing work on equalities within the organisation and the data produced on which to base developments. The Board approved the publication of the report and expressed a keen interest in supporting these activities in any way they could.

## **4 FOR DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Awarding 2023 Programme Update**

The Board were joined by [REDACTED], to provide an update on the Awarding 2023 Programme. [REDACTED] reported significant progress had been made since the last report to the Board with projects moving forward well. The overall programme status remaining at amber, and, despite the impacts of the previous months, the diet was at its expected position against the delivery timeline.

### **4.2 Education Reform Update**

The Board were joined virtually by Liz McGrath, Programme Director for Reform. Ms McGrath provided an overview of the New Qualifications Body project, including a progress update, challenges to progress and key and planned achievements.

Mr Borley updated the Board on the legislative intent position, reporting that further information had been received from the Scottish Government on what was intended to be included in legislation and what would be addressed at a later stage of the reform process, either through a re-developed Framework Document or other non-legislative means.

The Board acknowledged the extent of organisational capacity being used for reform work and the ongoing need to maintain continuity of business delivery.

The Chair noted that the expectation was for there to be a Bill published in May and the Board would be convened to update, consider, and discuss as appropriate.

### **4.3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Mr Baxter presented the forecast outturn for the period ending 28 February 2023 (Month 11) compared to the outturn budget position and detailed the agreed level and classification of Scottish Government grant funding required to deliver SQA's obligations in the current financial year.

The Board noted the financial position as presented.

## **5 FOR INFORMATION**

### **5.1 CASH POSITION**

The Board noted the cash position as it was presented.

## **6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business raised.

## **7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 26 April 2023, in Optima.