

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B143/1.3 i

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 1 JUNE 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Wednesday 23 February by video conference.

Members

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

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- * Mr M Baxter
- * Mr L Downie
- * Mr J McMorris
- * Dr G Stewart
- * Mrs D Mahmoud
- * Ms B Black
- * Mr J Booth

* Indicates present on the call

Observers

[REDACTED]

Ms N Crowley, Head of Chief Executive's Office

[REDACTED]

1 WELCOME

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting that apologies had been received from Mrs Handley.

1.2 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 Davis and Mr Hagney had children studying at Higher and Advanced 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.

1.3 **Minutes of the meeting on 27 January 2022**

The Chair noted that these would come to the following meeting on 23 March.

1.4 **Matters Arising**

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 the Board with a high-level update on activity across the organisation, since the last meeting, noting that the Muir Review remained a key focus for the Executive Team who were balancing this alongside other workload priorities. Mr Baxter would continue to engage with Scottish Government colleagues on governance and the tripartite work between SQA, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The Chief Executive reported that a significant amount of work is being undertaken across all directorates toward the key milestone of 7 March for the announcement of revision support arrangements covering 150 courses. This is alongside arrangements for the exam diet, and significant contingency arrangements.

The Executive Team remain focussed on staff engagement and providing support and information to colleagues alongside business delivery.

The Board noted the update.

3 PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 **Awarding 2022 Programme Update**

██████████ provided an update on the Awarding 2022 Programme, including key dates, issues and risks noting that the overall programme status remained at amber.

██████████ noted the key points and milestones including operational planning and readiness and highlighted the work being undertaken around appeals.

Risks and issues continue to be tracked and mitigating actions are ongoing. Workshops exploring options and impacts of appeals request volumes are planned for the following week.

The Board thanked [REDACTED] for the clear and comprehensive picture of the current position. The Board noted that the Scottish Government would continue to monitor the situation across the country and any decisions taken would be based on Government frameworks, including public health advice.

3.2 Financial Performance Report

Mr Baxter presented the Financial Performance Report, providing an overview of key movements and variance and noting that finance colleagues continued to meet regularly with the Scottish Government to monitor the position.

Mr Baxter highlighted that the outcome of Q0 position would be presented to Board at the meeting on 23 March before being submitted to the Scottish Government. With an expectation that 2022 would see the beginnings of a return to more normal operations, SQA would continue to track movement throughout the financial year.

The Board noted the update and discussed the allocation of resource, noting that this was based on a ranking system throughout the organisation, considering requirement and urgency.

4 PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Annual Complaints Handling Report

The Board were joined by [REDACTED] who provided a brief overview of the reporting illustrating SQA's compliance with the revised national complaints handling model adopted in January 2021 and describing a number of activities undertaken to further strengthen SQA's handling of complaints including steps taken to improve accessibility for vulnerable complainants.

[REDACTED] highlighted that audit findings on the complaints handling procedure had been positive and no complaints had been escalated to the ombudsman.

The Board noted the report.

4.2 SQA Equalities Work

The Board were joined by [REDACTED], who provided an overview of the large-scale programme review of policies and practices with a focus on impact on equality groups that had been undertaken since SQA signed a Section 23 Agreement with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on 21 September 2021.

[REDACTED] reported that structured input, guidance, and support materials had been developed by the Equality Team to further embed equalities considerations into wider decision making. A monitoring tracker had also been developed to provide insight across the organisation on the completion of EQIAs and identify trends.

The Board welcomed the update and discussed governance arrangements for the annual reporting of performance in this area. The Board noted that the target for the agreement was two years and that SQA would report to EHRC on a six-monthly basis, setting out progress, coverage and action planning for the next six-month period. It was agreed that updates would be reported to the Board following these meetings.

5 COMMITTEE REPORTS

The minutes of the Performance Committee meeting on 8 November 2021 were included in the papers for the Board to note.

6 FORTHCOMING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair updated the Board on the meeting that he had attended with the Chief Executive and Cabinet Secretary. He noted that the Muir Report and was still under strict embargo and it was anticipated that SQA would receive it in draft with recommendations in week commencing 7 March 2022. It was understood that the Cabinet Secretary would be meeting with SQA's recognised trade unions the following week but highlighted that she would not be sharing the report or its conclusions at that time.

It was agreed that the Corporate Office would circulate the Chief Executive's formal response letter to Board members.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair noted that the Board would meet again on Wednesday 23 March 2022 at 1pm.