

## SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B145/1.13 ii

### BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 1 JUNE 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Thursday  
23 March 2022 by video conference.


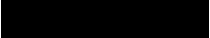

#### Members

- \* 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
- \* Prof K Thomson

#### Officers

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

#### In attendance

- \* Ms N Crowley, Head of Chief Executive's Office, SQA
- \* , SQA
- \* , SQA
- \* , SQA
- \* Mr M Ware, Head of Research, Policy, Standards and Statistics, SQA

#### Observer

- \* Ms L Murdoch, Scottish Government
- \* Indicates present

## 1 OPENING REMARKS

### 1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Ms Laura Murdoch, Deputy Director for Curriculum and Qualifications from the Scottish Government, who would be observing the meeting.

The Chair welcomed [REDACTED] in his capacity as newly appointed Corporate Office Manager and recognised that it would be Ms Crowley's last Board meeting before moving to a new position with City of Glasgow College. The Chair expressed the Board's thanks to Ms Crowley for the huge amount of work that she had done to support the organisation during her time in post.

The Chair noted that apologies had been received from Mr Smith.

## **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 Prof 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 from the meeting on 27 January 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 were approved.

## **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 an update on the significant work going on across the organisation, focussed on the delivery of the exam diet that was about to commence.

The Chief Executive reported that SQA would be working closely with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland following the publication of the Muir report.

The Board noted the update.

# **3 FOR DISCUSSION**

## **3.1 SQA Response to Russian Sanctions**

Mr McMorris reported that, in light of the ongoing situation in Ukraine and the implementation of UK sanctions on Russia and following advice from the Scottish Government, SQA had carried out a due diligence check within the business to identify any links or connections that SQA may have with Russia. Mr McMorris confirmed that SQA would continue to certificate and support Russian learners residing in the UK, placing reliance on UK Government vetting of individuals through the Visa and Immigration process.

The due diligence review had looked across approved sites and learner base and confirmed that SQA have no centres operating in Russia and will not recruit any centres. SQA contract operations and contract partnerships were also reviewed and confirmed that they too are complying with Government recommendations and severing any ties with Russian services and operations.

No direct procurement exposure to Russia via SQA contracts had been identified. The vast majority of SQA's procurement is conducted through either Scottish or UK procurement frameworks which are also used by public bodies in Scotland.

Strathclyde Pension Fund (SPF) has advised that, as of 15 March, steps were being taken to divest of direct holdings and that any indirect exposure is reducing all the time as companies pause or cease their Russian operations.

Board noted and approved the action that would be taken.

### **3.2 Awarding 2022**

██████████ 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 procedural delivery, grade boundary and exceptional circumstances services.

He reported that the final date after which conducting a national quality assurance exercise would become unviable option would be 25 March, after which the quality assurance planning resource would be reallocated throughout the programme where required.

The Board noted the update and discussed appointee recruitment, noting that this was at a comfortable position.

### **3.3 ACM 2021 Evaluation**

The Board received a presentation from Ms Black and Mr Ware providing an overview of the key pieces of work that had been undertaken to evaluate the 2021 Alternative Certification Model (ACM).

Ms Black highlighted the approach taken to evaluation and findings covering a number of different strands noting that each strand would stand alone, and a summary report would be developed and published to give view across the entire piece. all strands.

To understand how the ACM worked in practice and the practical experiences of learners and practitioners, SQA had used a mixed research model undertaking surveys followed up by in depth interviews to better understand survey results.

Ms Black provided an overview of the general themes emerging from this engagement and how this would be developed into future thinking for the

organisation. It was anticipated that the evaluation would be finalised and published in June.

The Board welcomed the presentation, commenting that it showed good reflective practice for SQA. Members discussed the various points of feedback, agreeing the importance of cognisance and focus on what is within SQA's responsibility. Overall, the Board welcomed gathering these balanced views from across the system to add value going forward.

### **3.4 Muir Review Next Steps**

The Board discussed the next steps for the organisation following the publication of the review by Ken Muir. The Chair noted that he had met with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills that morning, who had emphasised her intention to work with SQA, including staff and recognised trade unions to set out a way forward.

The Board recognised that following the review a range of issues required to be clarified for the new body and how it would interact with other education bodies. Members noted the Scottish Government's intention of working collaboratively and we await the detailed arrangements, including the roles of each NDPB and the trade unions, to set and manage expectations going forward.

Board members discussed the significant challenge and risk for the organisation, noting that this had, and would continue to be, shared with the Scottish Government. The Board supported a collaborative approach to engage and ensure input in processes so that true progress could be made.

The Board noted that SQA would meet again with Scottish Government and Education Scotland representatives the following week and a further update would be brought to the next Board meeting in May.

### **3.5 Escalated Audit Risks**

Mr Baxter reported that, in line with the SQA risk, opportunity and issues policy, the Audit Committee had agreed at their meeting on 14 March, that five risks from the 2021-22 Q3 Corporate Risk Register should be escalated to the Board. Mr Baxter outlined the risks presented in the paper, noting that all were associated with the replacement of SQA. He highlighted that SQA was not in a position to mitigate these risks effectively and without wider implications.

The Chair of the Audit Committee confirmed that Audit Committee had agreed formally to record the incremental escalation to the Board as per the SQA Framework Document and the Board were asked to review the risks and endorse escalation to the Scottish Government.

The Board approved the escalation.

## 4 FOR APPROVAL

### 4.1 Budget 2022-23

Mr Baxter presented the Budget paper setting out the opening position for FY 2022-23 compared, with variance explanations, to the opening budget from FY 2021-22. In previous years the measurement had been taken from the most recent Q3 position, however due to the impact of COVID-19 it had been decided to be more appropriate to show the movement from the same point last FY.

Mr Baxter provided an overview of the key assumptions upon which the budget had been prepared, noting that these were based on the latest intelligence from across all directorates. He noted that the position would be monitored on a monthly basis and adjusted on an ongoing basis throughout the financial year. The Board noted that the approach including the need for ongoing monitoring had been discussed with the Scottish Government who had endorsed the approach.

The Board approved the 2022-23 Budget.

### 4.2 Contract approvals

#### 4.21 *Telephony*

Mr Downie presented the proposal seeking approval from the Board to award the contract for the supply of new Telephony Services to enable SQA to meet the demands of internal and external customers. The Board noted that the current support contract for the existing Telephony System would expire in October 2022 and could not be extended beyond that date. The new telephony service would allow a move from an office-based system to a cloud-based system for flexibility in support of smarter working.

The Board noted that all presented contract approvals had been tendered in line with SQA's Procurement policy and The Procurement (Scotland) Regulations.

The Board approved the acceptance of the tender submission, noting that the contract amount was beyond the level of the Board's delegated authority and the contract would be escalated to Scottish Government for final approval.

#### 4.22 *Workforce Partnership tender renewal*

Mr Downie reported that the current Workforce Partnership would expire on 31 March 2022 and presented the proposed contract award which would enable SQA to onboard the new supplier and continue this Partnership model to deliver key pieces of work.

The Board approved the awarding of the contract to the proposed supplier, noting that the contract amount was beyond the level of the Board's delegated authority and the contract would be escalated to Scottish Government for final approval.

#### **4.23 *Renewal of Ivanti Service Management***

Mr Downie presented the contract renewal proposal for the Ivanti Service Management Tool, a fundamental service to the organisation used for change management, incident management, request management, reporting services and licence management.

Mr Downie reported that staff resources had been identified and there would be no changes to the resources used from the previous contract. As Ivanti are the incumbent supplier, this would be a licence renewal and so there would be no transition period.

The Board noted the initial renewal period and optional extension periods, agreeing that the need for these would be discussed nearer the renewal dates as organisational requirements may change during this time.

The Board noted that the contract amount was beyond the level of the Board's delegated authority and approved the escalation of the contract to Scottish Government for final approval.

[UPDATE: SQA received approval from the Sponsorship Team for the three above noted contracts on 24 May 2022.]

### **5 FOR INFORMATION**

#### **5.1 Schedule of Contract Approvals**

The Board noted the scheduled of contract approvals for the coming year.

#### **5.2 SQA Accreditation Annual Review**

The Bored noted the SQA Accreditation Annual Review outlining the activity undertaken over the past year and the plan for the coming year.

#### **5.3 Children's Rights Report**

The Board noted that the Children's Rights report would be published on 31 March 2022, in line with the requirements of The Children & Young Peoples Act 2014.

### **6 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The minutes of the following Committee meetings were included in the papers for the Board to note:

- Qualifications Committee – 15 September 2021
- Audit Committee – 1 November 2021
- Performance Committee – 8 November 2021
- Qualifications Committee – 10 November 2021

### **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was raised.

**8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair noted that the Board would meet again on Tuesday 3 May 2022 at 1pm.