

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B150/1.2

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 28 NOVEMBER 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Wednesday 26 October 2022 in Esk/Forth, Optima.

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 (B146/3.1 onwards)
- * Mr G Smith
- * Professor K Thomson

Officers

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

In attendance

- * Mr S Borley, Head of Chief Executive's Office, SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * Ms L McGrath, Reform Programme Director, SQA

1 OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, commenting that it was great to see Board colleagues in person at the first face to face gathering since March 2020. He noted that apologies had been received from Seán Hagney.

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 Professor 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.

Mr Smith noted that he remained a member of the Board for Skills Development Scotland until the end of October 2022.

The Board noted that Professor Thomson, Dr Stewart and Ms Farragher were all members of the Independent Review Group for Professor Hayward's Review work.

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 previous meetings

i 8 August 2022

The Board approved the minute as an accurate record of the meeting.

ii 9 September 2022

The Board approved the minute as an accurate record of the meeting.

iii 14 September 2022

The Board approved the minute as an accurate record of the meeting.

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 conclusion of Awarding 2022 and the appeals process, noting that outcomes would be communicated to centres by end of October, together with some data on estimates and appeals outcomes. Post-appeals attainment data would be published at the beginning of December

In preparation for Awarding 2023, NQ groups had been meeting on a regular basis. A few key priorities were emerging from these meetings, including the need to consider the appeals service which would operate in 2023. Further advice would be provided to the Board for consideration in the New Year.

The Chief Executive highlighted the considerable review and reform work underway, which was impacting on the work of SQA and progress on the new organisation. SQA would, of course, be fully engaging with the review processes underway.

She highlighted ongoing concern at the considerable delay to the Scottish Government's decision on the location of the accreditation and regulation function- and the impact of uncertainty on staff.

3 FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 AWARDING 2022 WASH-UP & AWARDING 2023

Ms Blair presented the Awarding 2022 Programme project dashboard noting that the programme was in the final stages and conducting a lessons learned exercise. An audit on the programme had been undertaken by Grant Thornton which would be reported to the Audit Committee once the final report had been received.

Ms Blair reported that the appeals process was on track to be completed and communicated to centres on Monday along with a full communications package of support. This support package would include a Q&A to answer concerns from candidates and parents which would also be available online and through SQA social media channels.

Moving on to arrangements for Awarding 2023, Ms Blair reported that arrangements were running in tandem with wash-up work for Awarding 2022. The programme status remained at amber due to industrial relations issues at Royal Mail which could impact question paper production.

Ms Blair reported that the approach to Awarding 2023 continued to be shaped through engagement with the National Qualifications Working and Steering Groups.

Scotland has made great progress in returning to pre-pandemic standards, but SQA remain conscious of the context and impact on candidates of disruption. As previously agreed, continued modifications would support learners thorough 2023.

The Board noted the update.

3.2 EDUCATION REFORM

3.21 Reform Landscape

The Chair provided a brief update on his meeting with the Cabinet Secretary the previous day.

Mr Baxter then provided an overview of the current landscape of reform, noting the complex range of reviews impacting the environment in which SQA are operating and their impact on future state.

Mr Baxter reported that a small core Reform Team were now in place and working hard on the commitments that SQA have made to deliver by the year end. The current focus of this team was on the development of the Strategic level Target Operating Model as required by Scottish Government. Following that initial work, SQA would be undertaking engagement with staff, Trade Unions and externally to seek input and validate proposals that emerge from this work.

Mr Baxter highlighted that the vision of this reform work needed to be ambitious. It would be for the Scottish Government then to consider what is deliverable given the position of public finances.

SQA colleagues continue to engage closely with the Scottish Government on the regulation and accreditation function and its location in relation to the New Qualifications Body (NQB).

Mr Baxter highlighted the importance of communication in this work, both internally and externally, and colleagues were working through the detail of this before taking this engagement forward. The Scottish Government would hold a key role here in arrangement of that activity. SQA would also be collating a response to the National Discussion consultation.

The Board welcomed the paper and its substantial coverage of range of issues. Members agreed that SQA had established a strong leadership position in this work with the expertise and data within the organisation and it was critical that the resource to support the requirements of the organisation was provided.

Considering the impacts of this on educational ecosystem, including the effects on SQA staff, the Board noted the lack of clarity around scope, resource, distance and vision. Timescales would be imperative to getting this right and the Board agreed that these should not be restrictive to ensuring that the conclusion of this work is right for the whole system. The Board noted that colleagues were meeting with SQA's recognised Trade Unions regularly and hope to have further information available to share with them as the work of the Reform Team continues to progress.

The Chief Executive highlighted the interdependency between continuity of business delivery and reform, within available resources.

3.22 Hayward Review – National Qualifications

Ms Farragher provided the Board with a summary position set out in the paper. She reported that the review was currently in stage two of a three stage process with the intention to share an interim report in January 2023 that will set out potential options. The final review report would be delivered in March.

The Independent Review Group were meeting on a monthly basis to discuss outputs from Collaborative Community Groups and look forward to the next stages. The Review consultation was live and SQA would be collating a response which would be shared with the Board for discussion.

Professor Hayward had held an all-staff event to present her thinking and take questions from staff. This stage of consultation provides an opportunity for SQA to put forward thoughts and visions for the best outcome that could be achieved through this reform.

The Board welcomed the update and discussed the impact of this reform on a range of qualifications, including vocational qualifications and Apprenticeships. Members agreed it was important to be aware of impacts on learners engaging

in the qualifications and assessment landscape at all levels and capture their experience in a meaningful way – and allow a wide variety of progression pathways

3.3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Baxter presented the Financial Performance Report up to P6 for FY 22/23 highlighting significant progress that had been made in addressing the initial overcommitment and that a range of measures had been identified to close out the remaining gap of £0.488m by P7 to ensure a stable position is achieved by end of the financial year. Finance colleagues were in the early stages of preparing the draft budget for FY 23/24.

The Board thanked Mr Baxter for the update and discussed the resourcing of reform, noting that all staff moving to the reform programme would be backfilled on a fixed-term basis with their substantive posts remaining available for them to return to. Letters of comfort had been issued to affected staff detailing as such.

4 FOR APPROVAL

4.1 QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE STANDING ORDERS

██████████ presented the Qualifications Committee standing orders, highlighting the minor administrative changes that had been made and that the Qualifications Committee had approved at their meeting on 28 September 2022.

The Board approved the standing orders.

4.2 CONTRACT APPROVALS

Mr Baxter introduced the contract approvals noting that each recommendation had been made on the basis of providing stability to SQA's core services and functions over a period of transition.

4.21 SQA2235 Courier Services

Ms Blair presented the contract recommendation noting that this was a critical service facilitating the movement of materials around the network of centres and appointees. Contingencies are in place and will remain so in order to ensure continued delivery.

The Board discussed the recommendation, highlighting the importance of assurance that SQA's suppliers fulfil their obligations with regards to fair work and employment rights. Mr Baxter assured the Board that the procurement process embeds fair work principles into its processes and agreed to follow up with further information.

On this basis, the Board approved.

4.22 SQA2359 Question Paper Printing & Collation

Dr Stewart presented the contract recommendation noting that these contracts cover the secure printing and packing of question papers

and maps together with the collation and preparation for the dispatch of materials to centres.

The Board reviewed and approved.

4.23 *SQA2313 Solar*

Mr Campbell presented SQA2313 and SQA2266 noting that both were core BAU technical platforms that support the organisation.

SQA2313 is SQA's e-assessment platform and adequate headroom was available over the length of the contract to allow the increase of e-assessment substantially.

The Board discussed the recommendation and Mr Campbell agreed to provide further information on the established upper limit of e-assessment within the contract and any implications of breaching, if possible.

On this basis, the Board were content to approve.

4.24 *SQA2266 Business World*

Mr Campbell reported that this contract covered the re-procurement of licenses to continue the supply of this service to the business.

The Board approved.

5 **FOR INFORMATION**

5.1 **OFQUAL UPDATE**

Dr Stewart provided a brief update.

Dr Stewart reported that a new policy and information for centres document 'Malpractice policy and procedures for SQA Qualifications regulated by Ofqual and / or Qualification Wales. (QW)' had been drafted and had been sent out for consultation with Ofqual and QW centres at end of September with responses due by 28 October 2022.

Further to this, a review of SQA's underpinning processes and procedures, and roles and responsibilities relating to the new policy approach was underway and a cross-functional team was being set up to take this forward.

The Board noted the update.

5.2 **BOARD MEMBER TRAINING RESOURCES**

██████████ updated the Board that, following engagement with Sponsorship Team colleagues, Board members had been offered access to the Scottish Government Governance Hub, a portal through which they would be able to access online support materials and training.

Board members agreed that they would submit a request to [REDACTED] by email for access details.

6 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Qualifications Committee

The Board noted the minutes from the last three meetings of the Qualifications Committee. Professor Thomson highlighted the quality of the material that had been brought through by the Policy, Analysis and Standards (PAS) Directorate. The Committee had welcomed sight of the Work-based Learning (WBL) Strategy at their last meeting and looked forward to a further meeting in December with a WBL focus. Professor Thomson noted that SQA were publishing a lot more of the research undertaken by PAS colleagues, who were also presenting work at the Association for Educational Assessment conference in Dublin and would be publishing work through the Hayward Review too.

Audit Committee

The Board noted the minutes of the previous two meetings of the Committee, with Mr McKay highlighting the key points and decisions.

Advisory Council

The Board noted the minutes of the previous two meetings. Ms Handley reported that at the meeting in September, Council members had raised a query regarding the sharing of the SQA Board agenda, minutes and that the Board minutes did not record the level of discussion and advice offered by the Advisory Council. The Board noted the feedback, commenting that discussions and outputs from the Advisory Council were often embedded into the development of the work that then comes to the Board after being considered by the group and fed back on.

The advice provided by the Advisory Council from its meetings on 31 March and 23 June 2022 was that:

- Clear messaging is needed on the background to the approach to standards and outcomes.
- More communications/information was required around the Education Reform from Scottish Government to stakeholders.
- Results Day communications require stakeholder involvement.

The Board noted the points made by the Advisory Council.

Performance Committee

The Board noted the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee. Ms Davis reported that the SQA Performance Framework was being evolved with the addition of a transition element, allowing the organisation to move forward over the course of the coming year.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other matters raised under any other business.

8 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on Monday 28 November 2022 on MS Teams.