

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B144/1.13 i

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 23 FEBRUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management held at 1pm on Thursday 27 January by video conference.

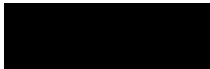


Members

- * Mr D Middleton (Chair)
- * Ms F Robertson (Chief Executive)
 - Ms E Craig
 - 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

Observers

- * 
- * 
- * Mr A Dickson, Head of Finance
- * Ms C Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government
- * , SQA Sponsorship Team, Scottish Government

* Indicates present on the call

1 OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting that no apologies had been received. He noted that Dr Thomson and Ms Hicks would be joining the call at around 1.30pm.

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 Private Discussion

The Chair held a brief closed discussion with Board members. Following this, the Board were joined by Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform and [REDACTED] from the SQA Sponsorship Team, Scottish Government.

1.4 Minutes from the previous meetings

1.41 8 September 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2021 were approved.

1.42 5 October 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 were approved.

1.43 28 October 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2021 were approved.

1.44 12 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2021 were approved.

1.45 24 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2021 were approved.

1.46 14 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2021 were approved.

1.5 Matters Arising

Mr Smith expressed an interest in joining the next meeting of the Performance Committee for the discussion on the SQA Staff Survey. The Corporate Office would arrange.

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, highlighting that a key workstream had been the refinement of supporting services for awarding 2022.

Another vital focus had been communications with staff on planning and delivery for 2022. This included the developments of the smarter working programme, which had been working on essential arrangements in SQA workplaces to allow for the return to the office under a hybrid working model, in accordance with government guidance.

3 PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 Post Results Services (PRS) in 2022

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the work undertaken in this area since the Board last considered these issues in December 2021.

Acknowledging that the approach was not without risk, she highlighted the considerations and benefits had been set out pragmatically and this package of measures strikes the right balance between responding to the system at cohort and individual level, while retaining the integrity of the qualifications.

Ms Black updated the Board on the work undertaken to ascertain a joint roles and responsibilities approach across the system, exploring all avenues of mitigation and maintaining examination as a central part of the process. Ms Black reported that key stakeholders, including centres and the EIS, were in support of the approach and SQA would be in a position to publish system-wide roles and responsibilities in early February.

The Board welcomed the presentation, supporting the helpful analysis that had been undertaken to provide clarity on the position.

The Board discussed the approach in depth, considering appointee release and the provision of evidence. Members acknowledged that the central guiding principle of demonstrated attainment applied and modifications to assessments had also been made to uphold equity, fairness and integrity.

The Board supported the plan as a whole system approach with learners at the heart of the decision making, with welcome assurances that standards would be maintained.

The Board noted that the Chief Executive would write to the Cabinet Secretary to communicate the approach and Board approval.

3.2 Invoking Plan B / Scenario 2

Ms Black noted that the Board had had an opportunity to consider this paper virtually earlier in the week, which made the recommendation that the Board approve the invocation of Plan B, on the basis of both the quantitative measures and the qualitative feedback SQA had received from the system. This would mobilise a set of arrangements to support learners in the immediate run up to the examination diet, in response to disruption to learning and teaching across the country.

The Board discussed the importance of timing in issuing further guidance to the system following invocation and noted that information would be provided on the planned offering for each subject ahead of the issuing of full guidance.

The Board were satisfied that the threshold had been reached for the implementation of Scenario 2/Plan B and approved on the basis advised.

3.3 SQA Communications Campaign

The Board were joined by Stuart McLaren, Head of Marketing and Communications and [REDACTED].

Mr Booth introduced the campaign, reporting that it had been developed to reassure all SQA audiences that the organisation continued to deliver its functions and provide support, following the Scottish Government announcement of its planned replacement.

[REDACTED] led the Board through a presentation providing an overview of the background work, proposed approach and next steps. She led the Board through the phases of delivery noting that the campaign would run over the next 12-18 months, with hopes to launch in early February.

The Board welcomed the presentation and agreed their full support of the approach.

3.4 Awarding 2022 Programme Update

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

[REDACTED] noted that, following the last update to the Board, key milestones had been completed including the e-marking upgrade and main diet validation project. [REDACTED] reported that an extensive suite of workshops was planned, the outputs of which would inform the next stage of detailed delivery planning.

The Board thanked [REDACTED] for the clear and comprehensive picture of the current position.

3.5 Finance Report

Mr Dickson presented the in-year position for 21/22 and provided an overview of the financial position. Mr Dickson noted the ongoing challenges to financial planning due to continual change in requirements in light of COVID-19 and reported that finance colleagues continued to meet monthly with Scottish Government colleagues to discuss the position.

The Board noted the update.

4 PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 SQA Gaelic Language Plan 2022-25

The Board noted the final version of the Gaelic Language Plan, including the consultation report that SQA submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on Friday 14 January, noting that this would be published externally once approved by the Bòrd.

5 COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

- Audit Committee – 16 August 2021
- Performance Committee – 23 August 2021
- Qualifications Committee – 10 May 2021
- Qualifications Committee - 19 May 2021
- Advisory Council – 6 September 2021
- Accreditation Committee – 27 April 2021
- Accreditation Committee – 27 July 2021
- Accreditation Committee – 26 October 2021

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair and Board members voiced their thanks and good wishes to Ms Craig at her last meeting of the Board before the end of her appointment. Members expressed that her contribution over the years exemplified the need for every qualifications Board to have membership with a wide range of skills and views.

No other business was raised.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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