

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Meeting in Authority Offices

Thursday 1 October 2009

Present:

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)
Dr. Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms. Inez Bailey
Mr. Mogens Berg
Dr. Seán Conlan
Mr. Tony Donohoe
Mr. Peter Mannion
Prof. Anne Moran
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan
Mr. Donal O'Rourke
Mr. Martin Shanahan
Prof. Seamus Smyth
Dr. Jim Murray (Chief Executive)

Apologies:

Mr. Eamon Devoy

In attendance:

Ms. Claire Byrne (Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications)
Ms. Trish O'Brien (Head of Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition)

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2009 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising

The Authority noted the event to mark the completion of the NFQ referencing to the EQF had taken place on 17 September 2009. The event was opened by Mr. Batt O'Keeffe, T.D., Minister for Education and Science and Mrs. Odile Quintin, European Commission's Director General for Education and Culture. The seminar attracted over 100 participants from across Europe including 18 members of the EQF Advisory Group. Presentations were made from a number of European perspectives which raised interesting issues for both national and meta Frameworks. The delegation recognised the Irish Referencing process as

being a successful undertaking and that it represented a model approach for those countries about to embark on their own referencing process.

The Authority noted that the Report on the Framework Implementation and Impact Study had been published on the Authority's website. Responses to the Report are being sought from sectoral coordinators. The Authority will then consider the most appropriate method of responding to the Report and its recommendations.

2. Validation Appeal under Section 27 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

The Authority noted that an appeal of a decision of HETAC to refuse validation had been received. It was noted that under the Validation Appeals Process the Authority will put in place a committee to review the appeal and make a recommendation to the Authority. The Authority agreed that the committee would comprise of the Chief Executive, a member of the Authority nominated by the Chairperson, an external person with knowledge of quality assurance in the university sector and a member of the executive of the Authority. The Secretary to the Committee will be the Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications.

3. HETAC Business Plan

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

The Authority considered the Business Plan and approved the plan under Section 58(5) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

The Authority welcomed the positive development of the Council advancing with such planning at this time, both in terms of the manner in which the Business plan augments and updates the published, statutory Strategic Plan 2006-10, and the way it is designed to provide an overarching coherence for business planning and performance management in HETAC in the lead up to the amalgamation of the national agencies involved in qualifications and quality assurance.

The Authority agreed to forward a copy of the plan to the Minister for Education and Science.

4. Budget/ Financial

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

The Authority noted the expenditure of the three bodies for the first half of the year and the savings which are anticipated arising from the Government schemes to reduce expenditure across the public sector.

The Authority noted the report prepared by the FETAC executive for the Department of Education and Science on pension arrangements that had been put in place in 2008 for four members of the Council's staff. The Authority noted that the Council intended to provide a further report to the Department by the end of October 2009. It was noted that this was the first time that this matter had been brought to the attention of the Authority. The Authority recognised that pension arrangements is a matter for the Council and the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Finance.

The Authority noted the progress update provided by FETAC on the FETAC Business System project. It was noted that the project was still on budget but had encountered delays in its development schedule. The delays will result in capital funding being required in 2010. The Department of Education and Science has sought an update on progress from the contractors at the next meeting of the Steering Group. The Authority agreed to write to the Department seeking approval for a third party analysis of the integration capability of the system to ensure that the project deliverables can support business functions in the context of amalgamation.

The Authority noted that the Comptroller and Auditor General had issued an audit certificate/report on the financial statements for 2008. The certificate provides an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements. The Authority noted that no issues arose during the audit as evidenced by the absence of a management letter.

The Authority noted an update on the work of the Internal Audit Committee and in particular the report of the audit of the operation of QualifaX. The Authority approved the audit report and the management response to the recommendations contained in the report.

5. Arrangements for Future Authority Meetings

The Authority agreed the following dates for meetings in 2010:

Thursday 28 January
Thursday 25 March
Thursday 27 May
Thursday 15 July
Thursday 30 September
Thursday 25 November

6. Organisational Change in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Area in Higher and Further Education and Training

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

The Authority noted that the Department had undertaken extensive analysis on the submissions to the Consultation Paper and that this was being used to inform the drafting of the Heads of Bill for the new legislation and this work is proceeding.

The Authority noted the announcement by the Minister for Education and Science on plans to establish a Quality Mark for English language schools and further and higher education colleges as part of efforts to get more overseas students to study in Ireland. The Authority noted that the Qualifications Authority, and subsequently the amalgamated body will be given the role of regulating international education programmes.

7. Staffing

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

8. Framework Implementation

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

The Authority noted the continuing progress regarding the alignment of UK VET awards with the Framework including the latest alignments and the new applications.

The Authority noted the executive's collaboration with the Higher Education Authority in its submission to the European Commission for funding under the Bologna Experts initiative. The Qualifications Authority and the Higher Education Authority will support each other in two projects that have been accepted for funding. The first project, a review of the ten year period since the Bologna Declaration was signed, will be undertaken by the Higher Education Authority. The second project which will be led by the Qualifications Authority is a conference on qualifications frameworks to be held on 15th April 2010.

9. Communications and Use of Framework

The Authority noted the paper prepared and circulated by the executive.

10. Recognition of International Qualifications

The Authority noted the paper that had been prepared by the executive.

The Authority noted the recent work undertaken by the Recognition Service in providing information and advice on the qualifications requirements associated

with two State developments – the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme being run by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and the National Car Testing Services, overseen by the Road Safety Authority.

11. Meeting dates

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 26 November 2009 at 11.00am in the Authority's offices on Jervis Street.

The meeting concluded.

Chairperson _____ **Date:** _____