

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Meeting in Authority Offices

Wednesday 21 March 2007

Present:

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)
Dr. Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms. Inez Bailey
Mr. Mogens Berg
Dr. Seán Conlan
Mr. Colm Hamrogue
Prof. Anne Moran
Mr. Donal O'Rourke
Mr. Martin Shanahan
Prof. Seamus Smyth
Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú (Chief Executive)

Apologies:

Mr. Eamon Devoy
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan

In attendance:

Ms. Claire Byrne (Director of Corporate Affairs)
Dr. Jim Murray (Development Project Leader) (Items 1-11)
Dr. Anna Murphy (Director of Framework Development) (Item 8)
Ms. Trish O'Brien (Development Officer) (Item 2)

The Chairperson welcomed Mogens Berg, new Authority member, to the meeting.

The Chairperson informed the meeting that following Caroline Nash's resignation from the Authority, a replacement nomination for membership of the Authority had been sought from IBEC.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2007 were agreed and signed.

2. Authority Quality Review

The Authority noted the paper and draft Authority Self-evaluation Report that had been prepared and circulated by the executive.

Following a presentation to the Authority by the executive, the Authority discussed the self-evaluation process and report. It was noted that the draft report provided a full and open account of the internal and external feedback gathered during the self-evaluation process and that it reflected the strong commitment to quality improvement and organisation development. The Authority agreed that the executive would finalise the draft report and submit it as soon as possible to the review panel. Members were invited to submit detailed comments on the self-evaluation report to the executive by 23 March 2007.

The Authority noted that, as part of the self-evaluation process, the executive had identified the need for the formal development of policies of the Authority in relation to its internal and external quality assurance processes. The Authority adopted two documents, *Internal Quality Assurance and Accountability Policy* and *External Quality Assurance Procedures*, for publication on the Authority's website.

3. FETAC Review

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

The Authority considered the draft terms of reference and protocol for the review and noted the review will look at the processes of the executive of the Council for performing the Council's functions, rather than the internal organisation of the Council as a whole. It was noted that the review proposes to benchmark the extent to which the Council in the performance of its relevant functions complies with the common standards or approaches to quality assurance in vocational education and training in Europe.

The Authority adopted the terms of reference in relation to the review of the performance by the Council of its functions. The Authority agreed that the executive would advance with making arrangements for the appointment of the review panel and the secretary of the panel. It was noted that the Authority executive is to explore options for whether the secretariat for the review will be provided by the Authority executive or outsourced.

4. Budget/Financial Paper

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

The Authority considered the draft budgets for 2007 of the Authority itself and the two Councils. The Authority noted the formal allocation of money for 2007 by the Department of Education and Science.

The Authority considered the funding requirements and agreed to make a provisional allocation for the three bodies from the current allocation made available to the Authority from the Department of Education and Science subject to

- the level of fee income to be received by the Council
- the continuing submission of quarterly reports to the Authority
- the Council confirming that each funding drawdown is required
- the continuing review by the Councils of its own funding needs
- the Council operating within staffing levels approved under Section 52 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999
- a review of the allocation should the level of expenditure rise to exceed or fall to below the provision funding allocation during the year.

The provisional allocation is as follows:

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	€2,108,680
Higher Education and Training Awards Council	€2,473,047
Further Education and Training Awards Council	€6,493,273

The Authority noted that the budget allocation by the Department for 2007 resulted in a reduced overall budget in 2007 compared to 2006 for each of the 3 bodies having regard to inflation. The Authority noted that this would create significant challenges for the three bodies in light of the development and quality improvement to be achieved in the period.

The Authority noted the update on the work of the Internal Audit Committee. In particular, the Authority noted the Comptroller and Auditor General's report and management letter on the Authority's financial statements 2005. The Authority noted the three matters raised in the management letter and supported the executives follow-up actions in each case.

5. Updates

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

The Authority noted that the Minister for Education and Science had signed an order commencing the Institutes of Technology Act 2006 with effect from 1 February 2007. The principal focus of the Act relates to the transfer of funding of the institutes of technology from the Department of Education and Science to the Higher Education Authority. The Authority adopted a set of revised reserved functions which incorporate edits that reflect the new legislation.

6. Update on Framework and Access, Transfer and Progression Implementation

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

7. Update on OECD project on recognition of prior learning

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

The Authority noted that main developments in relation to the Recognition of Prior Learning since the adoption by the Authority, in June 2005, of Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning. A draft national background report for the OECD thematic review is to be considered at the June Authority meeting.

8. Recognition of International Awards and Europass

The Authority noted the paper on developments in the area of recognition of international awards and in Europass.

The Authority will be kept informed of developments.

9. Decentralisation

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

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Authority will take place at 11am in the Authority's offices on Thursday 7 June 2007.

The Authority noted that the Authority meeting in July will be a full day meeting on 11 July followed by dinner and an overnight stay in a venue outside Dublin.

11. Other Business

The Authority noted that the Department of Education and Science had formally opened discussions with the executive on a proposal for the Authority to take on the role, on behalf of the Department, of funding the going concern known as Qualifax. Qualifax is an information tool and the national database for Higher and Further Education and Training programmes. The Authority agreed that the executive would advance discussions with the Department and a proposal will be submitted to the Authority at its meeting on 7 June 2007.

The meeting concluded.

Chairperson _____

Date: _____