

## **National Qualifications Authority of Ireland**

### **Meeting in Authority Offices**

**Wednesday 24 September 2008**

#### **Present:**

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)  
Dr. Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr. Mogens Berg  
Dr. Seán Conlan  
Mr. Eamon Devoy  
Mr. Tony Donohoe  
Mr. Shane Kelly  
Prof. Anne Moran  
Mr. Donal O'Rourke  
Prof. Seamus Smyth  
Dr. Jim Murray (Chief Executive) (except item 9)

#### **Apologies:**

Ms. Inez Bailey  
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan  
Mr. Martin Shanahan

#### **In attendance:**

Ms. Claire Byrne (Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications) (except item 9)  
Ms. Trish O'Brien (Development Officer) (except item 9)

#### **1. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2008 were agreed and signed.

#### **2. Chief Executive**

The Authority noted the Chairperson's paper of 19 June 2008 informing the Authority of the Chief Executive's imminent departure on 11 July 2008. The Authority noted the arrangements for filling the Chief Executive post on an acting basis pending approval of the Department of Finance to the advertisement of the post. The Authority noted that the position was offered to Dr. Jim Murray following the completion of an internal selection process. Dr. Jim Murray accepted the position.

The Chairperson expressed the Authority's appreciation for Seán Ó Foghlú's pioneering work with the Authority and the Authority looks forward to working with him in his new role as Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education and Science.

The Authority wished Dr. Murray well in his new role.

### **3. Budget/Financial Paper**

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

The Authority noted the financial activities for the Authority to August 2008, for the Higher Education and Training Awards Council to June 2008 and for the Further Education and Training Awards Council to July 2008.

The Authority noted the expected expenditure for the 3 bodies to the end of the year. The Authority noted that the Further Education and Training Awards Council had been allocated €3m to fund the Financial Business System project in 2008. It was noted that €1.5m of the allocated funds will not be spent in 2008 and that this funding will be required to complete the project in 2009. The Authority is to submit a request to the Department of Education and Science to extend the allocation of €1.5m into 2009.

The Authority noted that the Higher Education and Training Awards Council has an additional pension liability in 2008 in excess of €600,000 which cannot be met within existing allocations. The Authority noted that the Council had made significant reductions in expenditure to reduce the deficit caused by the pension liability. The Authority agreed to allocate additional funding to the Council from any remaining unallocated funding. The level of unallocated funding is subject to the cashflow position at the end of 2008. The Authority noted that the Council expected to receive approval for additional funding from the Department of Education and Science to offset the remaining shortfall for the funding of the Council's pension liability in 2008.

The Authority noted the update on the work of the Internal Audit Committee and following recommendations by the Committee agreed the response to the Comptroller and Auditor General's management letter and the formal adoption of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

### **4. Framework Implementation – Inclusion of University Awards in the National Framework of Qualifications**

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

The Authority considered the developments to date regarding the inclusion of the universities' awards in the National Framework of Qualifications. The Authority agreed to formally respond to the universities through the IUA regarding the listings of qualifications submitted by the universities for inclusion in the Framework. The Authority noted the matters arising following an analysis of the listings received from the universities and agreed an approach and course of action to address the matters.

## **5. International Recognition of Awards – Referencing the NFQ to the EQF**

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

Following consideration of the paper the Authority adopted an approach for referencing the National Framework of Qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework. The adopted approach requires the inclusion of international experts in the process and in this regard the Authority agreed to invite an expert on UK qualifications frameworks to participate in the process. The Authority also adopted the criteria and procedures that are being developed by the EQF Advisory Group as the basis for this referencing process.

## **6. QualifaX**

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

Following consideration of the paper the Authority approved, in principle, an approach and related charges for the provision of QualifaX data links to an external body. The approved approach is subject to stakeholder consultation.

## **7. DIT Quality Assurance**

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

The Authority considered the response of the Dublin Institute of Technology to the Authority's letter of 16 June 2008 which set out the Authority's observations and recommendations regarding the Institute's Annual Report for the academic year 2006-2007 in relation to its quality assurance/enhancement procedures. The Authority noted the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of the response and made a number of observations which will be communicated to the Institute.

The Authority noted that the Institute's Annual Report for the academic year 2007-2008 will be received by the Authority in November 2008 and that the Institute will be providing the Authority with an update on progress in implementing its responses to its recommendations at that time.

## **8. Nomination to the Board of the Irish Universities Quality Board**

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

Following the resignation of Seán Ó Foghlú as the Authority's nominee of the Board of Directors of IUQB, the Chief Executive of the Board requested the Authority to nominate an individual to fill the vacancy arising. The Authority

nominated Jim Murray, Chief Executive of the Authority, to the Board of Directors of the IUQB. The term of office on the Board will expire on 31 January 2010.

## **9. HETAC – Appeals Procedures**

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

The Authority agreed procedures, on receipt of a request from the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, to provide for an appeal to the Authority against a decision of the Council not to agree quality assurance procedures with a provider under section 28 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 subject to a number of suggestions made at the meeting.

The Authority agreed that the executive would consult with the executive of the Further Education and Training Awards Council with a view to agreeing a parallel appeals process between the Authority and the Council in respect of a Council decision made under section 18 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

## **10. Communications and Use of Framework**

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

The Authority noted the results of a recent public awareness survey which indicated an increase of 14% on awareness levels in 2006.

The Authority noted the executive's ongoing work with the Public Appointments Service and the Department of Finance to imbed the use of the National Framework of Qualifications in public sector recruitment.

The Authority noted the executive's ongoing work with the Central Statistics Office to achieve changes in the national census that reflect the new system of education and training qualifications.

## **11. Framework Implementation**

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

The Authority noted the updates in relation to the implementation of the Framework. The Authority noted that nine applications had been received from UK vocational education and training awarding bodies to have their awards aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications. The Authority noted that a report on the applications will be posted on the NFQ and NQAI websites in the coming weeks.

## **12. Recognition of International Awards**

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

The Authority noted the ongoing developments in the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework under the direction of the European Commission. The Authority noted that the Commission has established an Advisory Group comprising representatives of the Member States, and involving the European Social Partners and other stakeholders as appropriate, to provide overall coherence and promote transparency in the process of relating qualifications systems to the EQF. Jim Murray is the Irish representative on the Group.

### **13. Updates**

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

### **14. Meeting dates**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3 December 2008 at 11am in the Authority's offices on Jervis Street.

### **15. Future Authority Meetings**

The following is the proposed schedule of dates for meetings of the Authority to November 2009:

- Wednesday 28 January
- Wednesday 25 March
- Thursday 28 May
- Wednesday/Thursday 15/16 July
- Thursday 1 October
- Thursday 26 November

**Chairperson**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_