

**National Qualifications Authority of Ireland**

**Meeting in Authority Offices**

**Thursday 25 November 2010**

**Present:**

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)  
Ms. Inez Bailey  
Mr. Mogens Berg  
Dr. Seán Conlan  
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan  
Mr. Gary Redmond  
Mr. Martin Shanahan  
Prof. Seamus Smyth  
Dr. Padraig Walsh (Chief Executive)

**Apologies:**

Mr. Eamon Devoy  
Mr. Tony Donohoe  
Prof. Anne Moran (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr. Donal O'Rourke  
Dr. Pat Phelan

**In attendance:**

Dr. Jim Murray (Director of Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition)  
Dr. Anna Murphy (Director of Research and Strategic Development)  
Ms. Trish O'Brien (Head of Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition)

The Chairperson welcomed Dr. Padraig Walsh, the Chief Executive and new member of the Authority.

The Authority expressed its appreciation to Dr. Jim Murray for the work undertaken during his term of office as Acting Chief Executive of the Authority.

The Chairperson of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council informed the meeting that the Chief Executive of the Council would cease employment with the Council in January 2011 to take up a new position within the university sector. The Authority noted that Dr. Padraig Walsh will assume the role of Chief Executive of the Council when the current Chief Executive steps down.

## **1. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2010 were agreed and signed.

### **Matters arising**

The Authority noted that a draft discussion paper and recommendations '*Developing RPL in the context of the National Skills Strategy*' prepared by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs had been finalized and is to be submitted to the Department of Education and Skills.

The Authority noted that the Authority's 2009 financial statements had been cleared for signing by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Authority will not be receiving a management letter as there were no issues arising. The Chairperson and the Chief Executive signed the statements.

## **2. Budget, Finance and Risk**

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

The Authority noted the anticipated outturn of the three bodies which included savings arising from the Government schemes to reduce expenditure across the public sector, including the employment moratorium. The executive of the Authority reported that the Department of Education and Skills was being kept up-to-date on expenditure matters.

In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Authority reviewed its own performance and that of its committees and individual members. The Authority's performance was assessed individually by members and as a collective. The performance areas considered included: strategy and programmes of work; the review and monitoring of financial matters; the Authority committees' efficiency and effectiveness; the appropriateness of Authority and committee agendas; the adequacy of Authority information and conduct of Authority meetings; the effectiveness of communications within the Authority, between the Authority and the executive and with stakeholders; and the effectiveness of the systems of corporate governance.

The Authority found that its performance as a whole was effective and efficient. A number of recommendations were made to further enhance the Authority's performance in the areas that came under review.

The Authority noted the report on the work of the Internal Audit Committee.

### **3. Organisational Change in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Area in Higher and Further Education and Training**

The Authority noted the report by the Chief Executive on the work of the Interim Board.

The Authority noted that the General Scheme of the legislation to establish a new agency was approved by Government in January 2010. It is anticipated that the Bill is unlikely to take effect until the end of 2011.

The Authority noted that the interim Board of Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland (QQAAI) met on 17 November 2010 and will meet again on 15 December. Matters for early consideration include the location of the new body and the establishment of a steering group that will be tasked with managing the transition towards an amalgamated body.

The Authority noted the key business risks associated with the amalgamation of the bodies and functions. The Authority agreed that risk continues to be a priority for the organisation. The risks identified in the context of amalgamation remain a key concern and will be considered by the executive of the Authority as part of the Authority's risk management policies and procedures.

### **4. Arrangements for Future Authority Meetings**

The Authority agreed to amend its system of internal controls to state that the Authority will hold at least 4 meetings in any 12 month period and such and so many other meetings and at such times, as the Chairperson may determine.

The Authority agreed the following dates for meetings in 2011:

Thursday 3 February  
Thursday 14 April  
Wednesday 22 June  
Thursday 15 September  
Thursday 24 November

### **5. Quality Assurance / Enhancement Activities**

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

The Authority noted that the review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the Dublin Institute of Technology was progressing and that the executive is currently assembling the external panel for the review. The timetable for the review envisages a final report and response by the institute by summer 2011. The Authority noted that provision is being made in the Terms of

Reference to enable the review to smoothly transfer to the new amalgamated body, should this arise.

The Authority noted the outcome of the review of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the on-going quality assurance arrangements. The Authority has been appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills as the external quality assurance body for the College. The Authority noted that the College had agreed to submit an action plan for addressing recommendations made by the external review panel and this will be submitted to the Authority for consideration at the February 2011 meeting.

## **6. Framework Implementation**

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

The Authority noted the executive's ongoing work on a revised agreement on the alignment of UK VET awards with the National Framework of Qualifications. A draft agreement has been prepared and the executive is currently consulting on the draft agreement. A final draft will be submitted to the Authority for consideration at its meeting in February 2011.

The Authority noted the executive's engagement with FETAC on the implementation of the FETAC Common Awards System (CAS) and related standards development. The executive will present a full report on developments in this area at the next Authority meeting.

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

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

## **8. Recognition of International Awards and Irish Awards**

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

The Authority noted that the EQF referencing reports of member countries is progressing well. In October, France became the fourth country (following Ireland, Malta and the United Kingdom) to present its referencing report to the EQF Advisory Group. The Authority noted that work is also progressing at an accelerated rate on the development of national qualifications frameworks throughout most EU member and accession states and many will be in a position to present their referencing reports in 2011.

The Authority noted that the European Commission is currently developing a web portal to disseminate information on EQF and, in the longer term, to link national qualifications databases and allow citizens to search these databases on a European-wide basis through the portal. A working group of users from the member states has been established to support the Commission and contractors

on the project and the Authority is represented on the group. The Authority has supplied data and URL links to documentation on the Authority's own sites to facilitate the population of the 'Compare Qualifications Framework' page ahead of a public launch. The Authority will be kept informed of developments in this area.

**9. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 3 February 2011 at 11.00am in the Authority's offices on Jervis Street.

The meeting concluded.

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