

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Meeting in Authority Offices

Wednesday 26 September 2007

Present:

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)
Dr. Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Mogens Berg
Dr. Seán Conlan
Mr. Tony Donohoe
Mr. Richard Morrisroe
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan
Mr. Martin Shanahan
Prof. Seamus Smyth
Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú (Chief Executive)

Apologies:

Ms. Inez Bailey
Mr. Eamon Devoy
Prof. Anne Moran
Mr. Donal O'Rourke

In attendance:

Ms. Claire Byrne (Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications)
Dr. Jim Murray (Director of Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition)
Ms. Jennifer Doran (Development Officer) (Items 3a to 7)

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2007 were agreed and signed.

2. 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 2007 and the Further Education and Training Awards Council and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council financial activities to July 2007. The Authority also noted that the Department of Education and Science had given oral and email sanction of full approval

for FETAC's ICT project to proceed. The sanction related to commencing the process whereby unsuccessful tenderers could be given the necessary EU required notice. The Authority noted that indications from FETAC were that the projected date for the commencement of the project is late October/early November. The Authority agreed that up to €1,273,000 would be made available for the ICT project costs in 2007 subject to the Department of Education and Science making an additional €700,000 available, written approval for the project and FETAC's confirmation that the money's sought can be spent efficiently on the project by end December 2007. The Authority agreed that up to an additional €127,000 in funding be allocated to the Authority to fund necessary expenditure to end December 2007.

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 2006. The Authority noted the matters raised in the management letter and had particular regard to the importance of the trade creditors issue. The Authority supported the Internal Audit Committee's recommended response and follow-up actions in each case.

3. Delegation of Authority to Make Awards

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

The Authority noted that the Chief Executive of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council had written to the Authority on 18 September 2007 seeking the agreement of the Authority in accordance with Section 29(5) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 to the extension of delegation of authority to make awards to the Letterkenny Institute of Technology in respect of the Institutes taught programmes at level 9 and for the Athlone Institute of Technology to make certain awards at Level 9 (research masters programmes). The Authority decided that it was in agreement with the Council's satisfaction that the Letterkenny Institute of Technology had met the criteria. The Authority decided that it was in agreement with the Council's satisfaction that the Athlone Institute of Technology had met the criteria, subject to confirmation of a research accreditation report.

The Authority agreed an update of the reserved functions of the Authority to take account of the commencement of delegation to Athlone Institute of Technology for research programmes at level 9 when the research accreditation report has been confirmed.

4. Strategic Planning

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

The Authority noted that a draft Strategic Plan was being developed by the executive following the Authority's discussions at the July 2007 Authority meeting. The Authority noted that the executive is initially focussing on developing high level goals, an overall

vision and a revised mission statement which will articulate what the Authority aims to achieve. These will form the basis of discussions planned with the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Forfás and the Higher Education Authority. The Authority noted that a reference group meeting has been planned for 7 November 2007 to consider the drafting to date.

The Authority noted the recent correspondence from HETAC in relation to the Council's strategic planning. The Authority noted the intention of the Council to plan on a rolling basis and noted in particular the revised measures that have been adopted by the Council in that context. The Authority strongly supported the general agreement emerging from the tripartite meetings and referred to in the correspondence in relation to the value of co-ordination in planning among the Council, the Qualifications Authority and FETAC. The Authority's preferred approach would be that, building on effective tripartite engagement, new Plans for the purposes of section 58 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 would be in place for all three bodies as early as is possible next year.

The Authority noted that a progress report concerning the implementation by the Council of the findings of the Council's review had been received and the Council's intention to publish this.

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

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

The Authority noted that the Authority executive had agreed that the universities and the Authority will jointly establish a network which will consist of members of each university and associated college, and of members of the Authority executive. The aim of the network would be to assist institutions in the implementation of the operational and academic changes arising from the introduction of the Framework.

The Authority noted that the executive is advancing its work with the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to put in place quality assurance arrangements for UK awarding bodies using UK Framework awards in Ireland.

6. Communications and Use of Framework

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

7. Recognition of International Awards

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

8. Staffing

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

9. Review of the Further Education and Training Awards Council

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

The Authority noted that FETAC had published its self-evaluation report in August 2007. The Authority noted that the executive had appointed the review panel and secretary which is comprised of three Irish experts, an expert with student/learner perspective, two international experts and an independent Secretary. The Authority noted that the review visit will take place from 30 September to Wednesday 3 October 2007.

10. Decentralisation

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

11. Tripartite Meetings

The Authority noted that the tripartite meetings among the senior executives of the Authority, FETAC and HETAC had recommenced. The Authority noted that the aim of the tripartite meetings was to provide a forum to progress issues and to provide a basis for an enhanced coordinated approach to the work of the three bodies

12. Updates

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

The Authority noted that under section 31 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, Institutes of Technology with delegated authority to make awards are to have charters. The institutes are now in the process of establishing charters. The Authority noted that under section 31 of the Act, institutes are to consult with both HETAC and the Authority in preparing Charters, in such manner as HETAC and the Authority, respectively, see fit. The Authority agreed the approach of proposing to the institutes to hold a single consultation event with the Directors of all of the Institutes.

13. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Authority will held in the Authority offices in Jervis Street on Wednesday 28 November 2007.

The following proposed dates for meetings of the Authority to November 2008 were agreed:

- Wednesday 30 January
- Wednesday 2 April
- Wednesday 11 June
- Wednesday 24 September
- Wednesday 26 November

All meetings will take place at 11am in the Authority's offices, other than the June meeting. The June meeting will take place at 3pm in the Authority offices.

The meeting concluded.

Chairperson_____ **Date:**_____