

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Meeting in Authority Offices

Wednesday 31 January 2007

Present:

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)
Dr. Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms. Inez Bailey
Dr. Seán Conlan
Mr. Eamon Devoy
Mr. Colm Hamrogue
Prof. Anne Moran (by video conferencing)(absent for items 1, 2)
Ms. Caroline Nash
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan
Mr. Donal O'Rourke
Mr. Martin Shanahan
Prof. Seamus Smyth
Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú (Chief Executive)

Apologies:

Dr. Abrar Hasan

In attendance:

Ms. Claire Byrne (Director of Corporate Affairs)
Dr. Jim Murray (Development Project Leader)

The Chairperson welcomed the new Authority members Donal O'Rourke and Seamus Smyth to the meeting.

The Chairperson congratulated Caroline Nash on her new appointment as Head of the Irish School in Leuven.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2006 were agreed and signed.

2. Co-option of Members

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

The Authority agreed that the Chairperson would write to Professor Anne Moran inviting her to continue as a member of the Authority with her second term commencing on 7 February 2007 for a period of five years. The Authority agreed that the Chairperson would write to Mr. Mogens Berg inviting him to be a member of the Authority commencing on 7 February 2007 for a period of five years.

The Authority noted that the issue of the payment of allowances for members had not been resolved and would be pursued with the Department of Education and Science.

3. Staffing

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

The Authority agreed to support the outline staff structure with a view to the executive discussing its detail with the Department of Education and Science.

4. Quality Assurance and the Dublin Institute of Technology

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

The Authority considered an update report from the Dublin Institute of Technology in relation to its implementation of the recommendations made by the European University Association, as part of the review of effectiveness for the Institute's quality assurance procedures. The Authority noted this progress and agreed to seek a further update on the implementation of the EUA review recommendations as part of the Institute's report on the findings of its quality assurance procedures for 2006-7.

The Authority considered the new quality assurance procedures developed and adopted by the Institute's academic council in June 2006, and agreed the new procedures.

The Authority considered the findings arising out of the application of the quality assurance procedures in the Institute for the academic year 2005-6. The Authority noted the findings and the progress within the Institute in implementing quality assurance procedures generally. The Authority agreed that the executive, in consultation with the Institute, should review the material submitted in the annual report on quality assurance findings, in the light of anticipated developments with regard to the implementation of school/faculty reviews.

The Authority considered issues in relation to effective student feedback, linking quality assurance to the budgetary processes, the incorporation of programmatic reviews in school and faculty reviews and the training of reviewers and the members of quality-related committees. The intention of the executive is to discuss such issues directly with the Institute, and also within the context of the Irish Higher Education Quality Network.

5. Authority Quality Management Review

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

The Authority noted that the Terms of Reference for the Quality Review had been determined by the Department of Education and Science, in association with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It was also noted that the Department of Education and Science had identified possible members for the review panel and that arrangements are underway for the appointment of the panel. The executive agreed to inform members as soon as a panel is appointed. The Authority noted the elements within the review and the review process which includes the gathering of internal and external feedback from a broad range of stakeholders. The Authority noted that work was progressing on meeting the standards of the human resources quality mark, Excellence Through People and on the Authority's compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The Authority noted that a first meeting of the Authority Reference Group will meet on 6 February 2007 and will focus on the emerging thinking on the Terms of Reference for the review of implementation and impact of the National Framework of Qualifications and an update on the self evaluation process of the Authority's quality review.

It was further noted that the draft self-evaluation report would be considered by the Authority at its March 2007 meeting.

6. 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.

7. Budget/Financial Paper

The Authority noted the paper prepared by the executive.

The Authority noted the final outturn figures for 2006 for the Authority, the Further Education and Training Awards Council and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

The Authority noted that the audited financial statements for 2005 of the Further Education and Training Awards Council had been sent to the Authority.

The Authority noted the update on the work of the Internal Audit Committee and following recommendations by the Committee agreed to the appointment of

PricewaterhouseCoopers to provide internal audit services to the Authority for a contract period of 3 years.

8. Updates

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

9. Transfer and Progression Routes

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

The Authority had a significant discussion on the operation of the Framework transfer and progression routes. It was noted that an analysis of the operation of Framework transfer and progression routes suggests that the traditional web of arrangements is gradually evolving to take account of changes arising out of the introduction of the Framework. In certain areas of the Framework, it is too early to predict how the desired new routes will develop or operate. It was considered appropriate for the Authority to consider the effectiveness of progression routes relating to the Leaving Certificate, the Level 5 Certificate and the Advanced Certificate and issues arising, in consultation with relevant awarding bodies, providers and other relevant stakeholders.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Authority will take place at 11am in the Authority's offices on Wednesday 21 March 2007.

The meeting concluded.

Chairperson_____

Date:_____