

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Meeting in Authority Offices

Wednesday 7 June 2006

Present:

Mr. Paul Haran (Chairperson)
Dr. Caroline Hussey (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Eamon Devoy
Mr. Tony McDonnell
Ms. Caroline Nash
Mr. Pat O'Callaghan
Mr. Martin Shanahan
Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú (Chief Executive)

Apologies:

Ms. Inez Bailey
Dr. Abrar Hasan
Prof. Anne Moran
Prof. Ciarán Murphy
Prof. Joyce O'Connor

In attendance:

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chairperson welcomed the new Authority members. He set out his understanding of the Authority's role and indicated that he was looking forward to his role as chairperson. Each member introduced themselves and provided some background information on their nomination to the Authority. The Authority was also briefed by the executive on the names and nominating Minister or body of the members that could not be in attendance at the meeting.

2. Minutes

The Authority noted that the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 13 February 2006 were agreed by the Authority and signed by the former Chairperson prior to the term-of-office coming to an end for a number of members of the Authority on 25 February 2006. There were no matters arising.

3. Briefing Session on Authority Policies and Procedures

The executive of the Authority provided a briefing session to the Authority on the key policies and procedures that have been established by the Authority for its work. The briefing covered the following policies and procedures:

- Code of practice for the conduct of Authority meetings.
- Statement of principle in relation to potential conflicts of interest of members.
- Statement on the system of internal financial control
- Charter of the Internal Audit Committee.
- Reserved functions of the Authority

The Authority discussed each of the key policies and procedures and noted the requirements under each. In relation to conflicts of interest it was noted that the Secretary to the Authority (the Director of Corporate Affairs) is to endeavour to safeguard members from conflicts of interest arising by ensuring that any materials that may give rise to a conflict of interest for a member of the Authority are withheld from circulation to that member.

4. Briefing Session on the Activities of the Authority

The executive presented an overview of the many activities and projects undertaken by the Authority in partnership with stakeholders. The briefing session was structured in line with the themes relating to the operations and performance of the Authority as set out in the Authority's Corporate Plan 2006-2008. The themes are as follows:

- Theme 1 – National Framework of Qualifications
- Theme 2 – Access, Transfer and progression for Learners
- Theme 3 – Supporting the Awards Councils
- Theme 4 – Supporting the Dublin Institute of Technology
- Theme 5 – International Policy Engagement
- Theme 6 – International recognition of awards
- Theme 7 – Europass
- Theme 8 – Corporate Arrangements

The Authority discussed and noted the achievements, activities and aims under each of the themes. The intention of the executive to draft a glossary of relevant acronyms was noted.

5. Delegation of Authority to Make Awards

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

The Authority noted that the Chief Executive of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council had written to the Authority on 5 April 2006 seeking the agreement of the Authority in accordance with Section 29(5) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 to be satisfied that the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown and the Institute of Technology, Tallaght meet the Council's criteria for delegation of authority to make awards in respect of the Institutes' taught programmes at level 6 to 9.

The Authority decided that it was in agreement with the Council, under section 29(5) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 in relation to the Institutes' major awards from Levels 6 to 9 inclusive in the National Framework of Qualifications.

6. Dublin Institute of Technology – Quality Assurance

The paper prepared by the executive was noted by the Authority. It was noted that the Dublin Institute of Technology completed its self-evaluation in February 2005 and thereafter the evaluation team appointed by the European University Association commenced a review. The final report of the EUA review team, submitted to the Institute and the Authority and the Institute's response to the EUA report were also noted.

The Authority considered the EUA report, the Institute's response as well as the findings arising from the application of the Institute's quality assurance procedures for the academic year 2004-5 and noted all of these. The Authority agreed to support the recommendations that relate specifically to quality assurance in the EUA report, and the measures that the Institute is putting in place to respond to them. The Authority drew particular attention to certain issues which have also come to the fore in regard to the findings of the Institute's application of its quality assurance procedures for the academic year 2004-5, as follows:

- the need to implement more proactively and to review the annual programme reporting processes in order to encourage full participation by both students and staff, and in order to ensure greater transparency in the student feedback process
- the need to accelerate the development of the emerging systems for school, faculty and research review.

The Authority agreed that the outcomes of the effectiveness review should now be published, including the Authority's views. The Authority also agreed that the Institute should report back to the Authority in due course with regard to progress on the action plan contained in the Institute's response to the EUA report. To this end, it was considered that the executive should explore with the Institute the timing and format of this report and whether it could be tied in with the Institute's annual submission regarding the findings arising from the application of its quality assurance procedures.

7. Budget/Financial Paper

The Authority noted the paper prepared by the executive.

The Authority considered the appointment of additional members of the Internal Audit Committee. Pat O'Callaghan agreed to act as Chairperson of the Internal Audit Committee and Eamon Devoy and Tony McDonnell agreed to act as members of the Committee. It was noted that Tony McDonnell's term as a member of the Authority ends on 31 June 2006 at which time his successor, Colm Hamrogue will take over his role as President of the Union of Students of Ireland and will become a member of the Authority. It was also agreed that Colm Hamrogue would be invited to become a member of the Internal Audit Committee following his appointment to the Authority on 1 July 2006.

8. Appointment of Deputy Chairperson

It was agreed that Dr. Caroline Hussey be appointed as Deputy Chairperson of the Authority under schedule 1, section 9 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999. Dr. Hussey accepted the appointment.

9. Future Authority Meetings

The following Authority meeting dates were agreed:

Wednesday 5th July 2006 at 11.00am
Thursday 21st September 2006 at 11.00am
Wednesday 29th November 2006 at 11.00am

It is planned that these meetings will take place in the Authority's offices.

10. Other Business

Tony McDonnell expressed his farewell as a member of the Authority as his term of office concludes on 30 June 2006 and the Chairperson and members expressed their thanks to him.

The meeting concluded.

Chairperson _____

Date: _____