38th Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee

2 October 2023 from 2pm to 5pm
Hybrid Meeting

QQI Offices, Denzille Lane, Dublin 2

Meeting Note

Present: Kevin McStravock – Committee Chair
Jim Murray - QQI Executive Member
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Damien Owens - National Expert
Cassy Taylor - International Expert
Hannah McGee – National Expert
Achim Hopbach - International Expert (Virtually)
Anne Naughton – National Expert (Virtually)

In attendance: Peter Cullen - Head of Research and Innovation (QQI Key Executive for the PSC)
Beata Sokolowska – Item 6.1
John O'Connor – Item 10.4.1
Mairéad Boland (virtually) – Item 10.5.1
Rebecca Doyle - QQI Secretary

Apologies: Alan Power - National Expert

The Committee Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Committee.

1   Procedures relevant to the PSC's functions
No business.

2   Declaration of Interest.
There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

3   Minutes of previous meetings.
The minutes of the 37th meeting were agreed and signed by the chairperson.

4   Matters arising from the minutes of previous meetings.

4.1   Update on the International Education Mark

The Executive provided a verbal update on the International Education Mark (IEM) and its planned launch.

- The application system for providers is planned to open in 2024.
- Providers will have a six-month application window to apply for authorisation to use the IEM.
- The necessary documents and related measures are nearly complete.
- IT system is quite well developed at this point.

- Handbooks to assist providers prepare their IEM application will be available, and webinars are planned to take place.
- Several communications will be sent out to providers over the coming period to inform them about key dates.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the update.

5 Introduction
5.1 Kevin McStravock, welcome and introduction

Kevin McStravock, the new chairperson of the PSC, introduced himself and spoke of his interest in participating in the Committee's work.

The members welcomed Kevin and looked forward to working with him in the future.

5.2 Anne Naughton, welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed Anne Naughton as a new member of the Committee and invited her to introduce herself to the members of the PSC.

The members welcomed Anne and looked forward to working with her in the future.

6 Standards – review and development
6.1 Broad standards at NFQ Levels 1-4
- Explanatory Memorandum for all new broad award standards at NFQ Levels 1-4
- 16 Broad Award Standards at Levels 1-4 for Approval:
- Full report on QQI Consultation on Draft Broad Award Standards at NFQ Levels 1-4
- At a Glance - QQI's Public Consultation on a Suite of Draft Broad Award Standards at NFQ Levels 1-4
- Implementation Guidelines for Broad Award Standards at NFQ levels 1-4

The Executive presented sixteen of the twenty broad award standards at levels 1-4 for APPROVAL by the Committee. It envisaged that the remaining four would be presented for approval at the next PSC meeting.

The proposed new broad award standards represent an elaboration of the generic descriptors of the NFQ and are governed by QQI's Policy for the Determination of Award Standards. The development of these standards has been on QQI's agenda for some years.

A public consultation on the suite of twenty draft broad award standards and their implementation guidelines was held between November 2022 and February 2023. The QQI executive presented the Committee with a report on consultation findings. It received 192 coordinated responses. Overall, there was great engagement from the sector. Feedback from the consultation was considered in the final drafting of the broad award standards including proofing the standards by NALA to support accessibility.

The Executive also presented a one-page flyer titled 'At a Glance – QQI's Public Consultation on a Suite of Draft Broad Award Standards at NFQ Levels 1-4'. This one-page document outlines the consultation process.

The Executive also presented implementation guidelines for the new standards. The sector had requested that guidelines be clear and accessible and supported by webinars and other events to ensure effective use of the broad standards. New templates have been developed to demonstrate how programme and module learning outcomes can be mapped to the broad statements of knowledge skill or competence.

Discussion

The Committee noted the proposed new standards and supporting documents. It commended the Executive on the high level of engagement with stakeholders and on the 'at-a-glance' document that gave a useful overview of the consultation process. The Committee recognised that this level of feedback from providers and stakeholders demonstrates how the sector is engaged in the development of these new standards.

There was a question about the timeframe for reviewing the standards—the QQI executive indicated that this would be five years. It was noted by a member that these reviews would be an opportunity for improving the quality of the standards on a rolling basis.

Following discussion, the Committee APPROVED the sixteen Broad Award Standards proposed at NFQ Levels 1-4.

7 Strategic Approach

7.1 Report from the Board

The Committee Chair provided an update from the 22 September Board meeting.

8 PSC Reflection
No business.

9 Policy Stocktake and Roadmap
9.1 Policy Stocktake – Roadmap
   (*PSC/A38/8.1*)
The Committee noted that the Policy Stocktake and Roadmap document is currently being updated. This document lists existing and planned policy and standards related documents along with information that has been collected about plans for their review and development. It is a working draft and there are some gaps in the information returned. This will be followed up at the next meeting.

10 Policy Development and Review
10.1 Approval of minor modifications
No business

10.2 Green Papers
No business.

10.3 White Papers
No business.

10.4 Final Decision on QA Guidelines
10.4.1 Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Programmes

The Executive presented a paper on Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Programmes for approval. These guidelines update and **replace those first published in 2018 for blended learning programmes** and supplement the QQI *Core Statutory QA Guidelines* first published in April 2016. The Executive provided a brief update on the background of these guidelines and outlined the development and public consultation process.

The Executive consolidated and summarised the consultation responses, and this information was sent to DCU's National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) that had been contracted to draft the

guidelines. A follow-up series of meetings took place between QQI and NIDL at which the main issues arising from the consultation feedback were considered. NIDL carried out the revisions and submitted a revised draft to QQI.

Discussion

The Committee welcomed the Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Programmes and commended the executive on the high level of stakeholder engagement during the consultation process. The Committee discussed the potential benefits and risks associated with online delivery of programmes.

Following discussion, the Committee APPROVED the Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Programmes.

10.5   Policy Advice
10.5.1 Draft academic integrity policy

The Executive presented a paper on the draft academic integrity policy for Discussion. The Executive outlined the history of the draft academic integrity policy. The draft policy paper sets out QQI's intended approach to implementing the provision. However, the policy does not rely solely on the provision: It also draws upon the other statutory infrastructure within the 2012 Act (as amended) and sets out five central pillars that are intended to guide the overall policy implementation. The draft paper highlights the importance of engaging with stakeholders both nationally and internationally.

Overall, the response from informal consultations with stakeholder groups has been very positive – the key concerns that have arisen relate to resourcing academic integrity officer roles and academic integrity offices. The policy will be published for public consultation early next year and meetings with other stakeholders will take place over the coming months.

Discussion
The Committee welcomed the draft paper and found it to be clear and sufficiently detailed. The differentiation of roles was particularly clear. The reference to learners not being prosecuted was noted. The Committee suggested that it might be useful to add reference here to the proposed policy approach to offences under the provision committed by friends or family members of enrolled learners. The distinction between QQI as the qualification's authority and QQI as quality assurance agency is useful.
Following discussion, Committee **NOTED** the Draft Academic Integrity Policy.

11   Notable new publications

- [QQI Insight on Assessment - Learner Perspectives](#)
- [NAIN Generative AI Guidelines for Educators 2023](#)
- [NAIN Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management 2023](#)
- [Qualifications can Cross Boundaries](#)

11   Any Other Business

In closing the Chair thanked the members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their

contributions and participation in the meeting.

Meeting ended.