

Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)

Thursday 4 June 2020 (11:am – 1:30pm) – Virtual Meeting

Present: Anne Walsh - Committee Chair
Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member
Aileen Ponton - International Expert
Bryan Fields - National Expert
Daire Keogh - National Expert
Niamh O'Reilly - Board Member
Hannah McGee – National Expert
Alan Power – National Expert

In attendance: Peter Cullen – Head of Research and Standards (QQI Key Executive for the PSC)
Paula Gaffney - QQI Secretary
Mary Sheridan - QQI (Item 5.5.1)

Apologies: Aoife Sweeney – National Expert

The Chair welcomed the new members to the committee and thanked Daire Keogh for his services to the committee and wished him well in his new role.

1 Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

2 Minutes of previous meetings.

2.1 23rd Meeting (PSC/M23), Approved.

2.2 24th Meeting (PSC/M24), Approved.

The minutes were APPROVED and will be signed on behalf of the Chair in the Covid-19 context.

3 Matters arising from the minutes of previous meetings.

3.2 Update on the Covid-19 mitigation measures approved by the PSC on March 26

Note of PSC 04/06/20

A verbal update was provided.

One issue is the need for continuing special arrangements for the next academic year.

The QQI executive is currently gathering information from providers on the impact of the modifications to teaching, learning and assessment and expects to have a preliminary report by July.

It is planned to bring proposals for extending special arrangements to the committee after July.

3.3 Update on the “Outline PSC Approval Process for Policies, Guidelines and Standards”, associated flowcharts and checklist for members.

An outline PSC approval process was presented at the November meeting. Due to the Covid-19 emergency further development of this process is currently paused.

It was suggested that the planned flowchart and documented process would be especially useful for new members.

3.4 F-Gas standards update.

The Chair updated the committee on the finalisation of the F-gas Standards.

There were relatively minor changes relative to the November drafts and notably the final standards will take the form of non-CAS standards with the credit allocation being decided at the validation stage.

The Committee noted the matters arising.

4 Standards – review and development.

4.1 Update on standards development at NFQ levels 1-4.

Peter Cullen updated members on the development of broad standards for QQI awards at NFQ Levels 1-4. There will be core standards based on the EU Key Competence Framework at Levels 1-4 and standards for broad vocational fields at Levels 3-4. It is planned to consult stakeholders on draft standards in the fourth quarter of 2020.

This Committee noted the update.

5. Policy and Guidelines – review and development.

5.1 Policy Context.

5.1.1 Covid-19: update on current state of play in FET, HE and ELE.

Bryan Maguire provided a verbal update on the on the current state of play regarding Covid-19 impact on FET, HE and ELE.

The update addressed the measures taken by key actors in the current crisis. It also addressed the role of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN).

This Committee noted the update.

5.1.2 Update on relating Irish NFQ with European frameworks.

Barbara Kelly provided a verbal update.

QQI is currently, with the support of a national stakeholder Steering Group, in the process of preparing a single report for the EQF-AG to re-reference the NFQ to the EQF and re self-certify to the QF-EHEA.

Note of PSC 04/06/20

This will update separate reports completed in 2006 (EQF referencing) and 2009 (QF EHEA self-certification). The plan is to re-state and where appropriate update the previous reports including outlining all the national infra-structural changes that have occurred e.g. establishment of QQI, SOLAS, ETBs, TUs. All NFQ innovations and developments will be outlined including e.g. the development of Professional Award Type Descriptors, the Green Paper on the Qualifications Systems (to be published soon), the Comparability Study at L5 and L6 commissioned, the development of broad standards at L1-L4 and the launch of the Irish Register of Qualifications.

The Report will be presented to the EQF-AG in the Autumn.

This Committee noted the update.

5.2 Policy Review Schedule – No business.

5.3 Approval of minor modifications - No business.

5.4 Green Papers.

5.4.1 Update on the Green Paper on the Qualifications System and approach to consultation with stakeholders.

A draft *Green Paper on Qualifications* was submitted to the Committee in June 2019 and the Committee approved it as a basis for consultation.

Following consultation with key stakeholders, the paper was retitled and divided into two parts: (i) a *Green Paper on the Qualifications System* and (ii) an accompanying technical paper. Also, the original content was elaborated and refined.

The two papers will be published shortly. The initial launch will be a low-key launch with a full launch later in the year when hopefully the Covid-19 disruption will have settled down a little more. The consultation will not close until 2021.

This Committee noted the update.

5.4.2 Update on the green paper on assessment (verbal).

A response to the consultation feedback on the *Green Paper on Assessment* is being prepared and further engagement with stakeholders on specific follow-up actions is envisaged.

This Committee noted the update.

5.5 White Papers.

5.5.1 Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Enrolled Learners.

The proposed Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Enrolled Learners details QQI practice on the management of situations where programmes with enrolled learners are discontinued.

QQI has a legal obligation to ensure that all learners may complete their chosen programme of study. The Covid-19 crisis may lead to the discontinuance of some programmes and/or difficulty in completing some programmes.

The committee discussed some instances regarding fees/refunds and alternate programme arrangements for learners where programme completion may not be possible.

The committee welcomed the policy. The policy was approved by the committee and for further approval by the Board.

5.6 Final Decision on Guidelines – No business.

5.7 Policy Advice – No business.

6 Procedures relevant to the PSC’s functions.

6.1 Roles and responsibilities and code of conduct for members of QQI advisory groups.

The proposed document entitled “Roles and responsibilities and code of conduct for members of QQI advisory groups” was presented.

It was noted that a similar document for reviewers and evaluators was presented to the Committee in 2019.

The Committee agreed the document is clear and lays out what is expected from a member of an advisory group.

The Committee approved the document.

6.2 Review of QQI’s consultation framework.

QQI’s Consultation Framework sets out how QQI consults stakeholders, for example, during the development of policy, QA guidelines, and awards standards.

The Committee was informed about initial plans to review the implementation of the Consultation Framework and invited to comment.

7. New publications since the last PSC meeting.

It was noted that the list of new publications in the Agenda was incomplete, e.g. it did not include the documents approved by the Committee in March.

8. Any other business.

8.1 Introductory presentation by Hannah McGee (RCSI) (Transnational Education).

8.2 Introductory presentation by Alan Power (D/BEI) (Ireland’s Skills Infrastructure).

The Chair thanked both members for their presentations.

8.3 Synoptic report on the thematic analysis of reports on the accreditation/ approval/ review of programmes of higher education by Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Higher Education Institutions and Professional Recognition Bodies.

Peter Cullen provided a brief overview of the thematic analysis project and the work that remains to complete it. The synoptic report outlines the findings so far.

8.4 PSC self-assessment evaluation survey 2019.

The findings of the evaluation survey were presented by the Chair and discussed.

It was noted from the survey that it would be useful to set aside some time for new thinking and ideas aimed at enhancing the contribution of the PSC to QQI.

Peter Cullen mentioned that the QQI executive is planning to develop a research strategy and that the PSC might have a useful role in overseeing research activity.

Note of PSC 04/06/20

It was suggested the committee set aside a meeting on policy and strategy. The committee agreed this needs to be done face to face. Peter Cullen will sketch an outline of what needs to be discussed in consultation with the Chair.

It was noted that all Committees report in writing to the QQI Board, verbal reports are provided by Committee Chairs on a rotating basis.

Finally, it was agreed that members may request to receive softcopies of Committee documentation only rather than also receiving hardcopies.

9 Schedule for future meetings.

Dates agreed for the next two meetings.

29th September 2020 (format TBD)

7th December 2020 (format TBD)

The Chair thanked all members for their contributions, especially Hannah and Alan for joining the committee and their presentations today.

Meeting ended.