

Minutes of the 55th SCQF Partnership Board held on Wednesday 16 September 2021 at 09.00 hours via video conference on behalf of SCQF Partnership Conference Room, 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LW

Confirmed for website

Present:

Rob Wallen (RW)	Chair SCQF Partnership
Stuart McKenna (SMcK)	STF
Alastair Delaney (AD)	QAA
Gill Stewart (GS) on behalf of Fiona Robertson	SQA
Linda Pooley (LP) Observer	Scottish Government
Pauline Radcliffe (PR) Observer	Scottish Government

In Attendance:

Aileen Ponton (AP)	SCQF Partnership
Sheila Dunn (SD)	SCQF Partnership
Julie Cavanagh (JC)	SCQF Partnership
Beverley Wallace (BW) (Secretariat)	SCQF Partnership
Laura Wilding (LW)	SCQF Partnership

Welcome and introductions

RW welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted from Jim Metcalfe, Alastair Sim and Malcolm Foley. Gill Stewart (GS) was welcomed as a substitute for Fiona Robertson, along with Pauline Radcliffe (PR) as an observer from the Scottish Government. It was noted that AS had passed on his approvals to AP and RW for specific matters but did not have any other comments to add.

RW stated that the meeting was not quorate therefore AP would need to forward details of any decisions made during the course of the meeting to the Directors not present for their approval.

Register of Interests

RW reminded Directors of the Register of Interests form. Should any Director's interests have changed, that would have implications for work with the Board, the form should be completed and submitted to BW to record.

Noting of any conflict of interest

RW asked the Directors if they were aware of any issues presenting a conflict of interest and none were noted.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 09 June 2021

RW asked Directors if they were happy that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. AP commented that JC's name had been omitted from the list of those present at the meeting and the minutes would be amended accordingly. The Directors then confirmed they were satisfied.

RW then talked through the redacted minutes and the Board accepted the redacted version for the website.

2. Matters Arising

AP highlighted Item 5 relating to transferring £100k into a new savings account and Item 6 relating to the Partnership's formal response to the SFC tertiary report and subsequent meeting with Mr Hepburn. The Board then noted the matters arising.

3. Management Accounts 2021 – 22 Quarter 1

AP began by thanking LW for producing the accounts before then highlighting a number of items. The overspend on Office Equipment was due to purchasing equipment to enable a more hybrid way of conducting meetings and to support longer term home working. Other budget lines were expected to come under budget due to the impact of the pandemic and would balance out the overspend.

The organisation that was considering applying for CRB status had indicated it wished to go forward with the application but this would not be until Easter 2022, which would fall outside the current financial year, although it was still possible that another organisation would submit before the year end.

The conference budget line had been set to allow for a balance between income and expenditure to having a zero impact on the budget. This was on the basis that the conference planned for March 2022 would be face to face, with income being generated through charging a delegate fee. Due to continued uncertainties around the pandemic it was likely that a virtual or hybrid conference would take place which would incur different costs. Quotes were currently being obtained from event providers and a decision would be made in the coming weeks, with the aim of setting a charging policy that would still allow a zero impact on budget line to be maintained.

SMcK asked about the Cycle to Work scheme as he had not been aware of it. AP provided some background to the scheme and would forward SMcK more information. LP added that there was an additional government scheme that provided a contribution to cycle maintenance and details could be found on the government's website. The Board then approved the Q1 Management Accounts subject to approval by the Directors not present.

4. Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

RW asked AP if there were any items in the paper that she wished to highlight. AP began by informing Directors that LW would be going on maternity leave in November 2021. As a result, fixed term maternity cover would be needed and 'difficulties in recruiting staff' would remain as a risk on the Risk Management Strategy. Additionally, the Chair of ARC had offered to assist with the wording of the job advert to help the Partnership attract suitable candidates.

The external audit function tender process was underway with submissions due to close on Monday 20 September 2021. AP, LW and the Chair of ARC would then review these and decide if interviews were required. Details of the future audit firm would be brought to the AGM in December 2021 for approval, with the contract going live the following year.

Regarding the return to office, risk assessments had been completed and the office had re-opened w/c 23 August 2021, with rotas in place to help manage the number of staff safely working in the office at any one time. In line with government guidance the Partnership was supporting both staff

who wished to return to the office and those who wished to continue working from home. Due to the ongoing uncertainty around the pandemic, the opening of applications for home working had been delayed until the start of November 2021. The aim was for contracts to be issued and implemented by the start of January 2022, however this was subject to change. The Board then agreed the amended Risk Management Strategy and noted the update on the return to office.

Referring to Item 6 in the ARC minutes around access rights in SAGE, SMcK thought perhaps it was actually more beneficial for one person to have full access to the system. AP explained that the issue was more around one person having the ability to both input and approve invoices when there was no system in place for double approval. SAGE currently did not allow for such an override however an upgrade was due and LW was working with the Partnership's IT company to find a solution. The Board then noted the business conducted by ARC.

5. Report from the Quality Committee

SD provided a summary of the business conducted at the last Quality Committee meeting as detailed in the minutes. This included an update from RW on the work of the Board, the key strands of Partnership work recently supported by the Board and how the Board and Quality Committee interacted. JC had also given an update on key Partnerships and Communication priorities, including the Skills Recognition Project, School Ambassadors and the Veterans project. Also discussed at the meeting was the Partnership's response to the SFC review phase 3 report and SCQF database performance indicators.

SD then talked through Chartered Banker Institute and Opito Annual Monitoring reports, discussing the issues that had arisen from the monitoring and the challenges faced by each organisation. Following the review, both were deemed low risk and their continued status as a CRB was approved by the Quality Committee. The Board then noted the business of the Quality Committee.

6. Governance Update

AP reminding Directors that following a benchmarking exercise between the SCQFP and the Scottish Governance Code for the Third Sector back in 2019 it was agreed that the Board would be provided with an annual report on governance related matters. Annex 1 of the paper provided an update on Governance Activity for 2020-2021 and year to date 2021-2022. Annex 2 detailed all of SCQFP's policies, their review dates and who was responsible for approving any changes. It also highlighted any policies due for review in the current financial year.

The Partnership's suite of HR policies had been recently reviewed with only minor changes being made, with the exception of the new Homeworking Policy that had already been approved by the Board. As the changes were small, AP suggested providing Directors with a summary of the changes made at the December 2021 Board meeting, rather than distributing the large number of policies in full.

AP also highlighted that the Memorandum and Articles of Association which were last reviewed in 2014, although not due for review until March 2024, would need to be amended when SQA was superseded by a new organisation. The Board was satisfied with the level of information provided in both Annexes, was happy to receive a summary of the HR policy changes at the December 2021 Board meeting and approved the activity to date, subject to approval by the Directors not present.

7. Annual Report

AP began by thanking LP and her colleagues for their help in obtaining a forward for the report from Mr Hepburn, adding that she had recently met with Mr Hepburn to update him on the work of the SCQFP. Based on a recommendation from the Board last year, the visuals in this year's Annual Report were broken up with more quotations. Overall the Directors thought the report was clear, crisp and well laid out and congratulated the team involved however there was one

recommendation for future editions to replace some of the graphics with pictures and AP would pass this on to the relevant Team member. The Board then approved the Annual Report, subject to approval by the Directors not present.

8. CEO Report

AP updated Directors about a new online training package for new Quality Committee members to act as Reviewers. The training had been designed as a result of not being able to conduct face to face training due to the pandemic and was now ready to launch.

Following some lengthy negotiations, an agreement had been reached with UCAS for it to supply accurate and up-to-date HEI data for the SCQF database at a nominal fee. The data would be made available in October 2021 and then going forward in yearly instalments. AP highlighted UCAS's ongoing commitment and support of the SCQFP and a statement would be placed on the database recognising that UCAS had provided the data. The Board thanked SD and those involved for the work involved in obtaining that data.

Regarding the planned replacement of SQA, AP had contacted SQA to highlight the need for consideration to be given during the Review to the role that SQA had in relation to its three credit rating bodies which accounted for 25% of all qualifications on the SCQF. AP was a member of the new Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group set up to support the Review. GS then provided a short update and added that the SQA was aware of the implications for the SCQFP and a clearer picture of how the changes would affect the SCQFP would emerge following the completion of the review.

AP informed Directors that SDS/SQA had extended the level 4 & 5 Foundation Apprenticeships pilot to summer 2022 so there was no requirement at this time to include these on the SCQF.

The Veterans' skills mapping project was progressing well. The top job profiles of veterans who settled in Scotland had been identified and these would be the focus as the mapping tool was developed further. The plan was to then demonstrate a prototype of the tool at the steering Group in October and then potentially at a future Board meeting.

Finally SMcK commented positively on the recent blog by Andrew Cubie, SCQFP's first Chair. AP confirmed that in addition there would be another by current chair RW that reflected on the establishment and achievements of the SCQFP over the last 20 years. The Board then noted the updates provided by the CEO.

9. Update from the SCQF Forum

JC provided an update on the 30th SCQF Forum meeting as detailed in the paper, highlighting the discussion around face to face versus online conferences and Kathryn O'Loan's presentation on the Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability. The Board then noted the content of the SCQF Forum.

10. Any other business

There was a detailed discussion relating to a recent communication received from CGLI.

11. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 8th December 2021 from 09.00 – 11.00.

Note: All items for approval were subsequently approved in writing by those Directors not present at the meeting.