

Minutes of the 49th SCQF Partnership Board held on Thursday 19 March 2020 at 09.00 hours in the SCQF Partnership Conference Room, 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LW

Confirmed for website

Present:

Rob Wallen (RW) by vc	Chair SCQF Partnership
Jim Metcalfe (JM) by vc	College Development Network
Stuart McKenna (SMcK) by vc	STF
Alastair Delaney (AD) by vc	QAA

In Attendance:

Aileen Ponton (AP)	SCQF Partnership
Julie Cavanagh (JC)	SCQF Partnership
Sheila Dunn (SD) by vc	SCQF Partnership
Beverley Wallace (BW) (Secretariat)	SCQF Partnership

Welcome and introductions

RW welcomed all to the meeting in what was unprecedented times. It was noted that due to the escalating pandemic crisis the meeting would be condensed into one hour.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted from Bernadette McGuire, Chair of the Quality Committee, Alastair Sim and James Morgan who had planned to attend on behalf of Fiona Robertson. Linda Pooley sent her apologies as she had issues connecting to the meeting via video conference.

It was noted that AS had reviewed the papers and had emailed to say he had agreed with all points and actions, but had a concern regarding the role universities might be asked to play in loading up data on university provision into the SCQF database as mentioned in the CEO report. (This was discussed under item 3, the CEO Report.)

Register of Interests

RW reminded Directors of the Register of Interests form. Should any Directors interests have changed, that would have implications on 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.

Appointment of Director and Resignation of Directors

The Board formally accept the resignation of Rowena Pelik, QAA as a Director and formally approved Alastair Delaney, QAA as a Director of the SCQF Partnership Board. The Board also noted that Bernadette McGuire, Chair of QC and co-opted Director of the Board had given notice to resign and a replacement Chair of QC/Board Director would be sought. RW asked if Directors had any suggestions for suitable candidates to email their recommendations to AP and RW. It was agreed that the advert for this would have to be postponed.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2019

RW asked Directors if they were happy that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. The Directors confirmed they were satisfied.

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

2. Matters Arising

RW asked Directors if there was anything they wanted to raise from Matters Arising. SMcK asked, in relation to the SFC funding bid, if funding would still be received for years two and three as only a one year grant letter had been issued. AP responded saying normally a three years funding letter of comfort was issued, stating that funding was only approved for one year. This year the SFC had decided to only issue one year funding letters however the three year funding in principle was still agreed.

RW then provided an update around Item 4 and a SDS Graduate Apprenticeships meeting he had attended along with SD and representatives from QAA and SQA. The meeting discussed how the issue of clarifying the role, content, status and certification of Graduate Apprenticeships should be taken forward. Following RW's update a discussion took place and the Board agreed that a formal response be requested from SDS around its informal consultation with Universities. At this point AD joined the meeting.

Referring back to Item 2 AP informed Directors that she had formally received the one year grant funding letter from SFC; however the request for an uplift in funding from SG had not been successful. She had however received confirmation that the Refugee and Asylum Seekers project being undertaken with GCU would be funded for another year and SCQFP would have a role to play in the project. AP would request budget from GCU to fund the Partnerships part in the project. The Board were then happy to note the matters arising.

3. CEO Report

Before discussing the CEO paper AP informed AD that his position on the Board as a non-executive Director had been approved by the Board, adding that AD had provided all the necessary paperwork for Companies House.

AP then spoke about the issue of obtaining and inputting updated university provision into the SCQF database. Normal practice for most CRB's was for them to upload their provision directly into the database however this was not a requirement for universities. AS's concern that if universities were expected to do this now, it would place an unacceptable burden on them was noted. SD then talked the Board through how SCQFP was planning to overcome this problem without having to ask universities to individually upload data. Bulk uploading university data from HESA may be a solution and SD was looking at whether it could work and how much data manipulation would need to be done, stressing that universities would not need to complete any forms. AD confirmed he was also happy with the potential solution and the Board then noted the update. RW undertook to advise AS of this position.

Discussing the Malta project, AP told Directors that she and JC had been due to fly to Malta to present their proposal for the impact assessment methodology and timescales at a conference, run workshops and meet with stakeholders but this had been cancelled due to the pandemic. AP and JC did have a useful online meeting with Malta and had agreed with them how to fulfil the contract and move things forward without putting the contract in jeopardy.

RW asked whether the Scottish Parliamentary exhibition stand had been cancelled to which JC replied, saying she was waiting for SG to approach her for confirmation of what was happening. The Board then noted the updates.

4. Reflections on 2019 - 20

Due to time constraints AP asked SD and JC rather than presenting, to highlight any key points from the presentation that had been sent to Directors. SD began by highlighting that due to recent issues around third party credit rating and its quality assurance, moving forward the Partnership would need to look at the monitoring of third party credit rating and how SCQF levels and information was being used on certificates and in promotions and to see if there were other monitoring activities and guidance that SCQFP could provide to CRBs.

JC then highlighted that the Veterans Project and School Ambassador scheme were moving forward well although had not achieved as much with Veterans due to the time taken to get the qualifications matrix accurate. As that was now in place there was more capacity to undertake activities such as producing more leaflets and approaching Awarding Bodies. A number of new projects came in during the year that added to capacity issues but were deemed positive and were progressing well, notably the Migrant Workers and Refugee sub-project with GCU and the Impact Assessment work with Malta. Demand for School Ambassadors had meant that JC's Development Officer had been primarily engaged in this area, creating a further capacity issue as JC had to pick up other projects as a result. The Board then noted the update.

5. Impact measurement indicators 2019 - 20

AP talked to the paper, stating that the front page highlighted the rises and drops against a number of current PIs. It also proposed that two PIs relating to SDS's Skills Investment Plan and Regional Skills Assessments should come out and two new ones, namely School Ambassadors and Inclusive Recruiters, be added. JM asked if information relating to qualitative PIs such as responses and feedback from events and workshops were gathered and held elsewhere, out with the current PIs. AP responded saying follow ups/survey responses were done after every piece of engagement and this process was currently under review to enable greater feedback and analysis. It was agreed and noted by AP that there was a need to create a more qualitative set of PIs around the kind of engagement and feedback SCQFP received and that they should be added to the Impact Measurement indicators for 2020-21. SMcK noted there was nothing around training providers to which JC responded, saying it was difficult to quantify but they could maybe look at qualitative indicators, perhaps from workshop feedback. SMcK agreed that a further discussion was required and JC would take this forward.

6. Board self-evaluation

RW began by stating that he had received four evaluations back from Members. The general theme was that the Board worked effectively, was well supported through the papers it received and the meetings worked well. The main issue raised was around getting the appropriate balance between an operational focus and strategic focus. RW agreed with this and pointed out that June's extended Board Meeting (should it go ahead) would give the Directors the chance to focus on SCQFP's medium to long term strategy. JM asked if the papers for Board meetings could in future be distributed in one PDF instead of as individual documents to make it easier to review them, and BW agreed to arrange this.

7. Management Accounts 2019 – 20 Quarter 3

AP began by highlighting the two main messages taken from the last ARC meeting. The first was that the outturn was more positive than originally projected and Directors could find details of where the unbudgeted income came from on the paper. Secondly, regarding the overspend on School Ambassadors, as previously agreed by the Board this would be offset against additional income.

Following a question from JM about the need to have a discussion around the knock-on effects of the pandemic on SCQFP's financial bottom lines, RW asked AP to produce a paper around this for next Board Meeting. AP responded saying she would action this and facilitate further discussion in the meantime if required. She added that the Business Continuity Plan that had been invoked included a financial log of any costs incurred as a direct result of business continuity interruption and could be used to log more long range financial implications. The Board were then happy to approve the Quarter 3 Management Accounts.

8. Review of Strategic Plan 2019-22

RW introduced the paper, stating that it was an opportunity to revisit the strategic objectives adopted and to decide if any changes were required. AP then began by reminding Directors that the six strategic objectives were broad and high level. The paper highlighted a number of initiatives/workstreams that had taken place in the past year that may impact the work of SCQFP and AP asked the Directors if, in light of these, there was anything that should be added or changed in the plan. The Board stated they were comfortable with the strategy as it was.

9. Operational Plan and Budget 2020 – 21

AP began by providing Directors with some background. The Operational Plan had been discussed at both QC, Forum and ARC and once the high level plan had been approved by the Board, a detailed work plan would be created and reviewed by ARC on a quarterly basis. AP then talked through the current position as detailed in the paper, adding that under the current circumstances the new Development Officer post that was about to be advertised had been put on hold until later in the year. The Board then confirmed they were happy with the core activities and that they were a good basis for setting the detailed work plan.

Moving on to the 2020 – 21 Budget, the Board approved the budget with a slight surplus and noted that more money would be added to the reserves, putting the Partnership in a stronger position.

10. Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

RW invited AP to comment on the Risk Management Strategy that had been updated to include the risks associated with the pandemic crisis. The Partnership's Business Continuity Plan had come into force and all staff members would be working from home as of Thursday 19 March 2020. AP then talked Directors through the number of steps the Partnership had taken to prepare, which included completing a detailed impact assessment, setting up IT and remote access for all staff, looking at how to manage internal communication and planning what work could be undertaken from home. The impact assessment and decision log would be sent to the Chair of the Board and ARC as per protocol however Directors could request a copy.

AP had spoken to the auditors regarding how the April 2020 audit would be conducted in light of the pandemic, as a physical audit was no longer possible. The auditors confirmed they had an online portal to allow SCQFP to upload most of the information required but highlighted there may be a delay in the audit schedule as the auditors were also working from home. The plan was still to

bring the audit results to the June 2020 Board however this was dependant on both sides being able to work through the challenges and restrictions of the current situation.

Moving on to the Risk Management Strategy, RW highlighted that the pandemic had been added as a pre and post control risk. As the situation was constantly changing it was difficult to quantify the level of risk and what was important was that SCQFP remained viable as an organisation and continued to undertake its work as much as possible when large sections of the education sector were in close down. As the paper had been written two weeks before the Board meeting it was agreed that the risk be changed from amber to red and AP would action this. The Board then noted the Report from the ARC, the change to the Risk Register and the potential delay to the audit.

11a. Report from the Quality Committee

SD provided an update on the Quality Committee as detailed on the paper and the Board then noted the recommendations and business conducted by the Quality Committee.

11b. Quality Assurance Model Review

A presentation on the QAM review had been circulated to Directors ahead of the meeting and due to time constraints SD was asked to highlight the key changes that the Board were being asked to approve.

Asked whether the universal date for submission would create a strain on resources, SD responded saying that only SCQFP approved CRBs were required to submit. As these currently stood at seven organisations she did not anticipate a problem as the reports were due in the quieter summer period. The Board then approved the key changes proposed.

11c. Approval and Fees

The Board approved that no change was needed to fees as detailed in the paper

12. Performance appraisal and remuneration

BW, SD and JC left the room and a discussion then followed around performance appraisal and remuneration. AP then left the room to allow further discussion and the Board than approved the paper, agreeing that Scottish Government guidance should be followed as proposed

13. Update from the SCQF Forum

The Board noted the update from the Forum.

14. Any other business

RW asked Directors (assuming the longer June Board Meeting would go ahead) to submit anything they wished to be included in the strategy discussion.

15. Date of next meeting

Thursday 11 June 2020 from 09.00 – 12.30.